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IN QUEST OF AN IDEAL

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# IN QUEST OF AN IDEAL

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

BY

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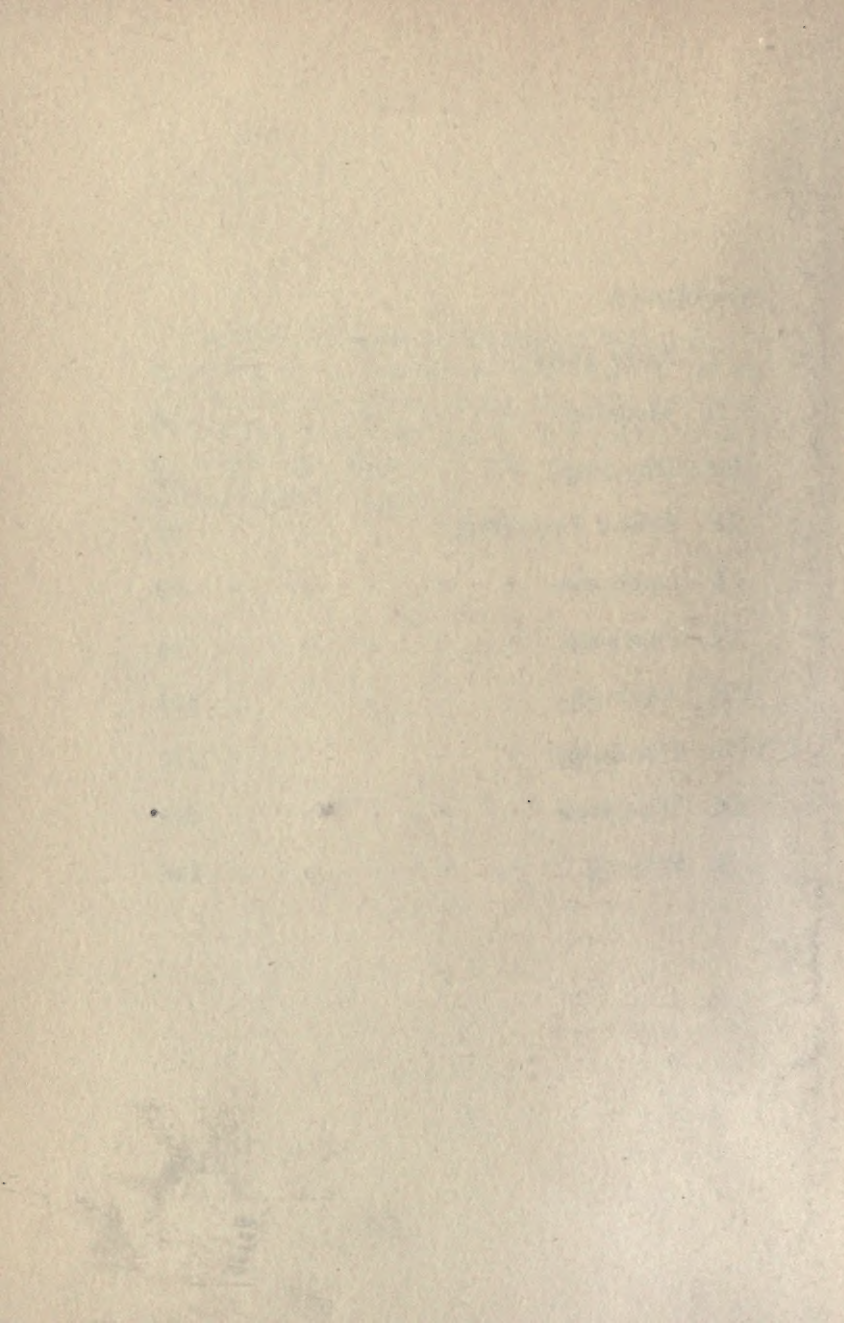


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## CHAPTER ONE

### Early Days

I have spent the greater part of my life in quest of an emancipative, an illuminative and a regulative ideal, an ideal which would give a meaning to life and a purpose to my life, and, in doing so, would deliver me from thralldom to aims and ambitions which, even while they dominated me, I felt to be unworthy of my better self. The quest has been in a sense its own reward ; for it has lured me on beyond all familiar horizons and opened up infinite vistas to the desires of my heart and the imaginations of my mind. And the nearer I have come to conscious intercourse with the ideal, the more clearly do I see that, under various disguises, it has been my guide through all the years of pilgrimage and pursuit.

I was born in the middle of Ireland and lived there till I was nearly eleven years old. My earliest recollections are of heather and cotton grass and bog ditches and the scent of



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“turf”-smoke. My father was an Irish landlord. My mother came from Dublin. My father’s family migrated to Ireland in the reign of William the Third, who is believed to have rewarded their loyalty to him with grants of confiscated land. My mother’s father was a Master in Chancery—a lucrative post, which must, I think, have been hereditary in those “good old days” either in his family or in some group of families to which his belonged, for he had held it from the tender age of twenty-four. We were not rich. Far from it. But for many generations my forbears on both sides had enjoyed possessions and privileges which were denied to the bulk of their fellow men. And they and we took all this for granted. At regular intervals I duly repeated Mrs. Alexander’s lines :

“The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at his gate,  
God made them, high or lowly,  
And ordered their estate.”

And if I gave a thought to the matter, I was well content to believe that the extreme poverty of the Irish peasants, whose mud cabins disgraced the roadsides, was divinely ordained. During the decade which immediately preceded my birth the population of Ireland decreased by one and three-quarter millions, as the result—direct or indirect—of the Irish Famine, in which

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the British Government allowed hundreds of thousands of Irishmen to die of starvation and famine fever rather than suffer the sacred laws of political economy to be violated. Such calamities were regarded in those days as visitations of God, to be endured with pious resignation—by those who did not suffer from them. The fatalism of the Early Victorian Protestants was selfish to the core; and selfishness is never so selfish as when it mistakes itself for piety. Only those who have escaped or are escaping from self can afford to say, “In his will is our peace.”

I was brought up with extreme and consistent severity. In the days of my youth the Biblical precept, “Spare the rod and spoil the child,” was accepted as authoritative by nearly all parents and teachers. I doubt if any other saying, with the possible exception of St. Paul’s impatient outburst, “I would they were even cut off which trouble you,” has been responsible for so much unmerited suffering. Parents who were familiar with the Apocrypha supplemented Solomon’s warning with passages from *Ecclesiasticus*, in which directions for the infliction of corporal punishment on children are given in some detail. As I look back to my childhood I seem to have been always in disgrace. I was said to be obstinate. But I know from my own experience that much of what passes as obstinacy in children is really paralysis caused by fear. I also know that severity in the

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treatment of children tends either to brutalise or to demoralise its victims, to make them either rebellious or deceitful—or both. Also, it sets them a bad example which, as the history of bullying in our public schools has taught us, the rougher sex is only too ready to follow. I paid a heavy price for learning this lesson; but when I became a father I had not forgotten it.

When we left Ireland we migrated to a London suburb, and at the age of thirteen I went to a richly-endowed day school. There I was taught Classics and mathematics, or rather, I had to learn these subjects as best I could from dreary textbooks, with but little help or guidance and with no inspiration from our overburdened masters, each of whom was responsible for two large “forms.” I had not much application in those days; and brain-trouble (cerebral, not mental) occasionally interrupted my studies. But I had periodic bursts of almost abnormal industry, and I had sufficient ability to rise to the top of the school. My chief motive in working was the desire to come out high in the half-yearly examinations and win prizes. I enjoyed doing Latin verses and solving problems in mathematics, and I had an aptitude for history. Otherwise, I took no interest in my work for its own sake.

When I left school I went to Oxford. I had hitherto either drifted or been driven through life.



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I had no ideal to guide me. The English ideals of respectability and prosperity are exotics in Irish soil ; and I owe it to my Irish birth and upbringing that, though I came under the influence of those false ideals, they have never really dominated my life. I understood that I was to be a respectable member of society ; that I was to do nothing to dishonour my name ; that I was to abstain from drunkenness, debauchery, and in general from riotous living ; that I was to make my way in the world ; that I was to earn my livelihood in a manner befitting a Christian and a gentleman ; that I was to put my talents, such as they were, to a profitable use ; and so on. All this was expected of me, and I expected it of myself. But these conventional ends of action were not ideals, and my interest in them was negative rather than positive. The desire to distinguish myself was the motive that chiefly swayed me in my pre-Oxford and early Oxford days. But “things won are done” ; and I soon realised that prizes and scholarships and first classes could not permanently content me, and I felt the need of a higher ideal than that of success.

What had religion done for me ? Nothing. My mother, who was deeply and sincerely religious, had thought it her duty to drill religion into each of her children, and had done so by the forcible methods which were then in vogue. And what was the result ? She had six sons, one of

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whom died as a boy. The remaining five all became agnostics, each in his own way, and not one of them has yet relapsed into orthodoxy. The idea of making children religious by giving them definite dogmatic instruction in what passes for "religious knowledge," is of all ideas the vainest. You can coerce them into professing religion, but you cannot coerce them into responding to its spiritual appeal. More than one earnest school teacher has assured me that the religious instruction given in our elementary schools, in preparation for the yearly visit of the diocesan inspector, tends to paganise rather than evangelise its recipients. And when I look back to my own childhood, and recall the active distaste for religion which religious instruction and compulsory attendance at religious services gave me, I can well believe that they are right.

I suppose I was not naturally religious (in the conventional sense of the word). Neither evangelicalism nor sacramentalism has ever appealed to me. When I was a boy I was sometimes taken to ritualistic churches. There the formalism of the proceedings revolted me. Something primitive and instinctive surged up in me in protest against what I felt to be a travesty of religion. Yet I believed what I was taught. I was not a born sceptic. I believed that the Bible was the Word of God and that its writers were in a class apart from all other poets, historians,

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prophets and preachers. 'I believed that the God of the Jews was the God of the Universe and that Jesus Christ was his only-begotten Son. I accepted the orthodox scheme of salvation. I believed in the Bible stories of the Fall, the Flood and the Tower of Babel. I believed that the victory of the Israelites over the Amalekites was due to the arms of Moses being held up by Aaron and Hur, and that the siege of Jericho was ended by the spontaneous collapse of its walls. I believed that God slew 70,000 persons by a pestilence because their king had taken a census of his people. I believed that Jael, who murdered her guest in his sleep, and the bears that killed forty-two rude children were instruments of the divine vengeance. And so on. I believed these things, not because they were intrinsically incredible and because belief in them was therefore a glorious triumph of faith. I believed them because I had never thought of questioning them; because I had got into a groove and was content to stay in it; because throughout the whole of my life I have suffered from temperamental sluggishness, from a mental *vis inertiae*, from instinctive reluctance to make a fresh start. In this respect I am not singular. I believe that spiritual indolence, to use a comprehensive phrase, is one of the besetting weaknesses of the human race.

When I came of age I was still at Oxford and



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had just begun to read for "Greats." This was a turning-point in my life. I loved Oxford and I had a happy time there. But my happiness was overclouded by my having to read for the two public examinations which were known familiarly as "Mods" and "Greats." Success in these examinations was desirable both for its own sake—that is, as a prize which was worth winning—and for the more utilitarian reason that it would help to give me a good start in life. But the inexorable approach of the dreaded ordeals cast a slowly lengthening shadow on what would otherwise have been bright sunshine. It did worse than this. The examinations drew to themselves the interest which I ought to have given to the things that I was studying. I worked hard at Oxford (as hard as a delicate brain permitted), not for the pleasure and profit of learning, but in order that I might get "Firsts" in my examinations.

This statement is perhaps too sweeping. If it is true of "Mods"—and even there it needs to be qualified—it is much less true of "Greats." Of all University examinations, "Greats"—Classical "Greats," an examination in Greek and Roman history, and in philosophy, ancient and modern—is the most difficult to cram for and the most stimulating to read for. So at least it was in my day. It is possible that since then cramming for "Greats," as for other examinations, has become a fine art. Not long ago I met an Oxford

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tutor who boasted that he had got Firsts for two men who really deserved Seconds. I doubt if that would have been possible in my day. Reading for "Greats" marked an epoch in my inner life. Some wise tutor told me that if I wished to do well in the examination—(he had to appeal to that motive)—I must read widely and not confine myself, as I had hitherto done, to certain specified texts and certain recommended textbooks, and that I must think for myself and not accept uncritically whatever I took down in a lecture or read in a book. I followed his advice and began to read and think for myself.

One result of this was that my religious beliefs disintegrated rapidly. Yet, strange as it may seem, I managed for some time to combine rejection of sundry Bible stories with belief in the supernatural origin of the Bible, and rejection of much of the teaching of orthodox Christianity with belief that Christianity was divine in a sense which set it apart from all rival religions. It was not until I read Matthew Arnold's book, "Literature and Dogma," that I finally broke with the hypothesis of the Supernatural and with the dualism of the human and the divine. The chief merit of that book is, I think, its frankly naturalistic attitude towards religion. It treats the Bible as human literature, not as a storehouse of divinely communicated "theological information." It takes for granted that

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Christianity, like Brahmanism and Buddhism, is one of our "all too human creeds," and it then sets to work to show how it came into being and what were its merits and defects. When I had finished the book I had said good-bye to the Supernatural. It was easy for me to do so, for I had always had a temperamental bias against dualism. But of this more anon. Henceforth Nature was enough for me; but as the Supernatural faded away, the limits which it had imposed on Nature disappeared with it, and Nature, potentially infinite in its every dimension, but actually expanding with the expansion of my soul and the enlargement of my outlook on life, became all in all. But of this, too, more anon.

Having lost the guidance of revealed religion, I felt that I must, at all costs, work out a scheme of life for myself. So I left Oxford, with the full determination to devote myself to the task of thinking out, and if possible of solving, the supreme problems of existence. With this end in view, I looked about me for a calling which, without being too absorbing or exacting, would provide me with the means of subsistence. I was advised to apply for an Inspectorship of Schools, and I did so. I left Oxford in the spring of 1874. The Liberals had just been defeated at the polls, and the Conservatives, headed by Disraeli, had taken office. The Education Act of 1871 had necessitated the appointment of a



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large number of school inspectors. As long as the Liberals were in power, it was a *sine qua non* that an inspector should have got a "First" at Oxford or Cambridge, this being, I imagine, regarded as a guarantee of industry and decent ability. I had got a First at Oxford, but this counted for nothing in the eyes of the Conservative Lord President of the Council, the dispenser of patronage in the Education Department. I was fortunate enough to get a school inspectorship, but I owed my appointment entirely to political interest. I was ridiculously young, less than twenty-five, and I had, I need hardly say, no qualification for the very difficult and responsible work of inspecting schools. But though I was called a school inspector, I was not asked to inspect schools. I was asked to examine the scholars and report on the premises and equipment.

When I began my new life, I was deeply interested in all "great matters," so far as this was compatible with almost entire indifference to politics, sociology, and economics. I doubt if there was any one in England who took less interest than I did in the social life of his fellow men.

## CHAPTER II

### Thinking

The next few years of my life were years of great, though one-sided, mental activity. I embarked on the quest to which I had vowed to dedicate my life, and which first presented itself to me as the quest of ideal truth. I have elsewhere told the story of my earliest essay in "high thinking"\*: "It did not take me long to discover that if I was to bring order into my thoughts I must try to write them down. The attempt to do this led to the further discovery that, unless I could combine sincerity with lucidity in writing, I could not hope to attain to sincerity and lucidity of thought. There seemed to be a close connection between sincerity and lucidity; but sincerity was my first concern. When I had written a passage I would read it over and ask myself: Is this what I really think? Thus my attempt to give expression to my thoughts

\* "The Secret of Happiness."

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led me to scrutinise them continually. Under the searchlight of my scrutiny new aspects of, new subtleties in, my thoughts began to disclose themselves, and these in their turn demanded and were duly reacted upon by expression. As time went on I made a third discovery—that the interaction of thought and expression was a process to which there was no limits, and therefore that there could be no finality in thinking. But it was not till middle life that this discovery came home to me as a conviction. When I was young I had the ardour and audacity of youth, and I thought myself quite competent to construct a complete system of thought. I did in fact construct such a system—a bulky work in three parts (each of which, if printed, would have filled a stout volume) which bore the portentous titles of (1) Method, (2) System, (3) Proof.”

Had my *opus magnum* seen the light, it would have borne the title of “God and Man: An Appeal to Nature.” Having rejected the Supernatural, I had no choice but to appeal to Nature—to Nature in general, to human nature, to my own nature. What it was my nature, my true nature, to believe, that I must believe, that I did believe in some secret recess of my soul. The master-key to philosophy was in the keeping of psychology. My business was to determine what were the real tendencies of my nature, and to follow these to the death. But “what is

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universal is natural," and universality is therefore the proof of naturalness. The real tendencies of my nature are the central tendencies of human nature; and the central tendencies of human nature are at the heart of Cosmic Nature, of Nature as such. This, then, was the dilemma that faced me. If I was to understand the Universe I must first understand myself, and if I was to understand myself I must first understand the Universe. The microcosm explained the macrocosm, and the macrocosm explained the microcosm. I was involved in a logical "circle" from which, in logical strictness, there was no escape.

As I had to begin somewhere, I began with the Universe. The purpose of my work was to prove that, of the antithetical poles of existence—spirit and matter—the former, not the latter, was the real pole. What do I mean by the phrase "antithetical poles"? Let me try to explain. Young as I was in those days, I had made up my mind on one point; and old as I am now, I am still of the same mind. I have a temperamental bias against dualism, which has controlled the whole course of my thinking, a bias which has passed through many stages and has at last transformed itself into a theory of the Universe (if I may be allowed to use such an ambitious phrase). When a man begins to think, he finds that he has to reckon with his instrument of thought—language. Now language, as we all



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know to our cost, is dualistic, in the sense of abounding in pairs of antithetical terms. More especially is this true of those little words, which are also our great words—the words which sum up whole aspects of existence, whole meridians of Nature's infinite sphere. Such pairs of terms are *good and bad, true and false, swift and slow, large and small, hard and soft, high and low, light and darkness, knowledge and ignorance, spirit and matter, soul and body, love and hate, God and the Devil, heaven and hell*. We are apt to assume that in each case the antithetical terms stand for mutually exclusive alternatives, between which we must make our choice; that every statement, for example, is either true or false, that every action is either right or wrong, that we either know or do not know, that after death we shall either be "saved" or "damned." It needs but a little reflection to convince us that this assumption is groundless. Let us take the antithesis of the *swift* and the *slow*. It would be nonsense to say that every movement is either swift or slow. It would be nearer the truth to say that every movement is both swift and slow, swift by comparison with what is slower than itself, slow by comparison with what is swifter than itself. And so with the other antitheses. What seem to be mutually exclusive alternatives are really the opposite poles of a doubly infinite process. Or rather, since each of the poles is an

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ideal which is never fully realised, the apparent alternatives are really opposite tendencies, each of which, besides passing into infinity in what I may call its own direction, interpenetrates the other and passes with it, in *its* direction, beyond the limits of experience and thought. For example, there is no movement so swift, but we can conceive of a swifter; and no movement so slow, but we can conceive of a slower. Therefore the movement of light is slow as well as swift, and the movement of a snail is swift as well as slow. Thus the opposites always coexist, at any rate within the range of our experience; but they vary together in inverse proportion, each of them rising as the other falls, and falling as the other rises.

This was the way of looking at things to which I betook myself when I forswore dualism. I have never been able to find a satisfactory name for it. I thought of "mono-dualism," but it would not do. "The law of polar opposition" is better, but it does not satisfy me. It may be said that when I forswore dualism I ought to have become a monist. Had I done so, I should still have been in bondage to dualism; for could there be a more flagrant example of dualistic thinking than to say that every thinker must be either a dualist or a monist? Monism and dualism spring from the same root and have everything that is essential in common. The only difference between

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them is that in a monistic system one of the two terms in the antithesis is suppressed. Suppressed, but not cancelled. The dualist and the monist agree in regarding the opposites—A and B, let us say—as alternatives. The dualist avows his preference for A, while recognising the existence of B. The monist carries his preference for A so far as to deny to B the right to exist. But the ghost of B will always haunt him and will stultify his attempts to make A all in all; and his theory of things will therefore be inadequate and one-sided.

For example, dualism divides the Universe into Nature and the Supernatural world. The materialistic monist accepts this distinction as vital and then proceeds to deny the Supernatural, the result being that the Universe, as he conceives it, shrinks to the dimensions of the “nature” of Supernaturalism, which corresponds roughly with the “outward world” of popular thought. Dualism, again, regards the distinction between good and evil as fundamental, and sees in the drama of existence an eternal conflict between the two principles. Monism accepts the distinction as fundamental. Then of two things one. Optimistic monism regards the world as wholly good, and says that whatever is is right. Pessimistic monism regards the world as wholly evil, and says that whatever is is wrong. But a wholly evil world is a nightmare. And the

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dream of a world which is wholly good will not be realised until good has absorbed evil into itself and grown, in doing so, to the fullness of its own stature.

It is but a maimed and stunted universe which metaphysical monism presents to thought. The gulf of separation in a dualistic system drains into itself the infinitude of each of the dissevered worlds or principles, and leaves a finite world on either side of it. The monist regards one or other of these finite worlds as the all of existence, the result being that if he is (for example) a thoroughgoing materialist his world is a soulless body, and if he is a "pure idealist" his world is a disembodied ghost.

My rejection of dualism, then, far from committing me to monism, compelled me to renounce it and all its ways and works. In the world, as I surveyed it from the standpoint which I had adopted, unity of being was harmonised with duality of aspect or direction, and continuity of movement with infinity of range. But these conceptions were too abstract to serve me in the conduct of my own life. It was an ideal that I needed even more than a first principle. I found that if I was to bring order into my thoughts with a view to bringing purpose into my life, I must think in each of two great categories. The first was that of the *real* and the *unreal*. The second was that of the *actual* and the *potential*.



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I found that I must bring the fundamental antithesis of *spirit* and *matter* under each of these categories in turn. I began with the category of *reality*. I asked myself which was the real pole of existence, the spiritual or the material. But in asking myself this vital question I remained faithful to the law of polar opposition. I did not think, as so many people do, in the false category of the *real* and the *non-existent*. I did not say: The material world is real; therefore the spiritual world is an illusion. Nor did I say: The spiritual world is real; therefore the material world is an illusion. I recognised that the real and the unreal were polar opposites, and that there were therefore degrees in reality.

Which was the higher reality, *matter* or *spirit*? Before I could answer this question I had to decide what meaning was to be attached to each of these antithetical terms. I began, as most people do, by identifying matter with the outward world, with the data of sense-perception; and spirit with the inward world, with the data of intuition and consciousness of self. This, as I gradually realised, was but a crude and inadequate interpretation of the supreme antithesis. The beauty of a sunset, the grandeur of mountain scenery, the infinitude of ocean, the purity of the dawn, the majesty of the midnight sky—these were attributes of the outward world, but they were surely spiritual attributes, not material.

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Did they reveal themselves to my bodily senses ? Or did they reveal themselves to *me* through the medium of my bodily senses ? The latter seemed the more reasonable hypothesis ; but if *I*, the self-conscious spirit, began to go out into the visible world and help to build up its qualities, how far would that adventure carry me ? Would not the whole material world melt away at last into immateriality and become absorbed into myself ?

Realising, as I could not fail to do, that I was looking at things from a deceptive standpoint, I gradually felt my way to another. The real, as distinguished from the dialectical, basis of materialism is that the average man is *sense-bound*. He instinctively takes for granted the intrinsic reality of the world which lies around him, and he finds it impossible—physically impossible, one might almost say—to believe that there are, *in the order of Nature*, any things which are at once objectively real and imperceptible by his bodily senses. As he is an idealist at heart, he has had to invent a third philosophy—supernaturalism—in order to reconcile the materialism of his conscious thought with the idealism of his sub-conscious vision. He finds an asylum in the supernatural world for the spiritual realities of which he is dimly conscious, but for which he cannot by any effort of thought find a place in the world of his experience. Hence the danger,

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if he should cease to believe in the Supernatural, of his relapsing into materialism, pure and simple. But these are matters which I need not now discuss. Let me go back to the fact that the average man is sense-bound and that this quasi-physical disability controls the movements of his conscious thought. What will happen when he begins to analyse the physical phenomena which surround him in order to discover their underlying properties and laws,—in other words, when he enters the arena of science? His instinctive prejudice in favour of the data of his bodily senses, and therefore of the intrinsic reality of the outward world, will ally itself with his professional prejudice in favour of analysis as the pathway to truth and therefore to reality; and he will arrive at last at the conclusion—a conclusion which he may or may not present to his consciousness—that what is ultimate in analysis is absolutely real.

This conclusion is, I think, the cardinal assumption, the central dogma, of materialism. The counter assumption is that synthesis, not analysis, is the pathway to reality, and that what is ultimate in synthesis is absolutely real. It was to this interpretation of the antithesis of spirit and matter, it was to this conception of what constituted the test and measure of reality, that I gradually worked my way. When I first became aware of it, I cannot now remember.

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It has taken me thirty or forty years to fathom its depth of meaning, or rather to sink the plummet of my thought to the depth, whatever it may be, which it has now reached. Little by little, the idea that *wholeness*, rather than inwardness or immateriality, is the other self of reality, took possession of my mind and guided it in its speculative adventure. The idea has thrown light on many of the problems that beset me; and if I live long enough it will, I hope, throw light on many more. It is not enough that I should oppose my self to the outward world. If the opposition is to become effective and fruitful, self must for ever and for ever transcend its own illimitable limits, until in the last resort it becomes one with the Whole.

It was long before I could present this idea to my consciousness; but it was at work in me, as I can see now, even in those early days. And I had need of its leavening influence. For my own idealism, ardent and uncompromising though it was, was "notional" rather than "real." The truth is that I, too, was sense-bound; and sense-bound I remained till after middle life. I could not persuade myself that anything existed objectively which was not perceptible by my bodily senses. Hence, to take a pertinent example, my belief in immortality was a conclusion, not a conviction. And its basis was therefore insecure. When I wrote to a cousin



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to sympathise with her on the death of her baby, and she wrote in reply, "I am sure he is very safe," I said to myself, "*sancta simplicitas*," or words to that effect.\* The result of my being sense-bound was that, as an idealist, I was, so to speak, *alone with God*. God was at the heart of me, as an unrealisable ideal which I was yet to strive to realise; and in virtue of his indwelling presence I, the Ego, was more real than the outward world. In this way, without intending to do so and without realising what I was doing, I fell into the toils of a new dualism. I opposed subjective reality to objective reality, and allowed an impassable gulf to open up between the two worlds. I ought, if I had been true to my own first principles, to have thought of the inward and the outward worlds as two antithetical infinities interpenetrating each other *ad infinitum*. Instead of doing this, I thought of them as alternatives between which I must make my choice. And I made my choice, wholeheartedly, in favour of the inward world. *I* was real. The outward world might or might not be an illusion. *I*, the inward world, was real. Therefore, even while I was sense-bound—or was it because I was sense-bound?—I was allowing the outward

\* As there was no supernatural asylum for the departed spirit, and no place for it in the realm of objective reality, I must, I think, have relegated it to a kind of metaphysical dreamland, and taken for granted that the soul of a baby was not equal to the task of sustaining life in such an environment.

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world, the world of objective reality, to melt away into nothingness. This brought me to the verge of what metaphysicians call *solipsism*. In one of my earlier poems I confess that

“there are times when all I see,  
And hear, and feel, and think upon,  
Seems meaningless apart from me :  
I live : All otherness has gone.  
The buoyant overmastering soul  
Claims for itself to be the whole.”

I accepted all the practical consequences of this peculiar brand of idealism. An ideal should do two things for its votary. It should breathe into him the breath of a larger life, and so emancipate him from petty cares and worries and from ignoble claims and ambitions. And it should bring light into his darkness ; and by doing this, and by giving him a central aim, it should help him to regulate his conduct. My ideal did both these things for me. Alone as I was with God, I had to make myself worthy of the Divine Presence. This was to be the purpose of my life. How was it to be done ? As God was the spiritual pole of the Universe, my duty was to spiritualise myself to the uttermost. What did this mean ? The idea that wholeness is the other side of spirituality had not yet presented itself to my consciousness ; but sub-consciously

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I was in touch with it ; and under its influence I began to realise that self-integration, the achievement of wholeness for myself, in my own being, was to be the central purpose of my days. I reached the same conclusion from another quarter of thought. When I rejected the Supernatural, Nature became my all. My conception of Nature was at first much too narrow. But it was widening from year to year. Now the master law of Nature's being is the law of development, of growth. This I could not fail to see ; and I instinctively drew from it the deduction that human nature, in all its length and breadth and depth, came under the same master law. At this point, had my temperamental bias been materialistic, I would have relapsed into materialism. For, in bringing human nature under the law of growth, I would have identified human nature with the physical, corporeal side of itself, and would therefore have become a physiological fatalist, content to believe that my future self was wrapped up in a speck of protoplasm, and that my destiny was wholly determined by the accident of my birth. My intense faith in my own Ego carried me past this danger-point. It was not my body only that came under the law of growth, but the I, the self, the soul, the child of God. To bring self, in all its dimensions, with all its potentialities, to maturity, to ripen into the perfection of which my many-sided

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nature admitted, to become whatever I had it in me to be—this was the end which I set before myself, an end which gave a meaning and a purpose to my life, and to which, in theory at least, I have always been consistently loyal.

In pursuing this end I came into line with the bird, the beast, the fish, the insect, the plant, and all other living things. But I differed from them in one important respect. Each of them was in the grip of destiny. In the process of its growth it was moving towards a virtually predetermined form. The pressure of the expansive forces that were at work in it was irresistible. It could not co-operate with them. It could not thwart them or modify their action. It was passive in its very activity. Its life was unconscious, instinctive, blind. It was otherwise with me. I was a conscious being. I could look before and after, and also look all round an ever-widening environment. The resources of the Universe were potentially at my service. I could, in some sort and some degree, direct—consciously direct—the process of my growth. I could co-operate with the forces that were making for my development. I could also resist them. In other words, I could either ally myself with my destiny or thwart it. But *noblesse oblige*. Exceptional privileges carry with them exceptional obligations. If a growing peach were suddenly endowed with consciousness and



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will power, would it not strive to realise the perfection of peachhood, to become as sweet, as shapely, as juicy, as well-flavoured as possible? Could I do less than strive to realise the perfection of manhood, whatever that might prove to be?

I had now committed myself to the path of self-realisation, and I was to spend the rest of my life in trying to find out what self-realisation meant. My aim was to become one with God, the spiritual pole of the Universe. I was therefore to spiritualise myself to the uttermost. But I had convinced myself thus early that the outgrowth of spirit was to be achieved by self-integration, not by self-mutilation. Both in theory and in temperament I was averse from asceticism, in the narrow sense of that word. I was indeed to die to the actual self—to die to it hourly, daily, yearly—but only in order to provide for the outgrowth of the ideal self, which could not come into being so long as the actual self claimed to be the real *me*. I was to discipline myself, but only in order to strengthen the authority of the ruling self, to establish the ascendancy of the higher side of my nature, to secure inward harmony in the kingdom of the soul. I was to aim at all-round development. I was to make the most of all my latent powers and possibilities. I was to become whatever I had it in me to be.

Unfortunately, I had but a hazy idea of what

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all-round development really meant. Though sociable enough in my everyday life, I was, as a thinker, entirely a-social. As a school inspector, I had not yet begun to fathom the profound and mysterious depths of child nature, and I was therefore ignorant of the vast potentialities of my neighbour—the plain average man. I had yet to learn that the communal self is the link between the individual and the divine or ideal self, an essential link, without which that transformation of individuality which is of the essence of self-realisation cannot be effected. He who seeks to be alone with God is so far removed from God's presence that he is in danger of being alone with the arch-enemy of God—with self. This was one of the lessons which I had yet to learn. There is a moral solipsism which is the nemesis of too much inwardness, and I came near to being infected with that malady.

## CHAPTER III

### Rhyming

If I may not say that I was alone with God in those days, I may at least say that I had, as my constant companion, the vision of the immanent or indwelling God. But I had another companion—the beauty of nature, of the outward world. Sensitiveness to natural beauty was an antidote to my undue inwardness. It was also one of the influences which moved me to write poetry.

I began to make up rhymes when I was a boy of ten. During the last two years of my school life I wrote a good deal of verse. While I was at Oxford I scarcely wrote a single line. Then the power came back to me, and during the next five years I produced two volumes of verse. Then came another silence which lasted for eighteen years. Then the power again came back to me and remained with me for another period of five years. Then came a third silence,

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which lasted about sixteen years. Then, as my swan song, I wrote a short sequence of "Sonnets to the Universe."

The fact that my output of poetry was so strangely intermittent shows that it was a genuine overflow from the wells of my inner life. So does the further fact that it was all intensely subjective, that the words *I* and *my* and *me* abound in nearly every poem that I wrote. I can honestly say that I never tried to write poetry. When the wells overflowed of their own accord I wrote. When the waters remained below the flood level I was silent. I made no attempt to pump up the hidden waters and pour them away. Hence the significance of my poetry as a revelation of what was passing in my heart and mind. Whether what I wrote was good or bad, whether it was poetry or mere verse, whether as a craftsman I was original or imitative, I was at least trying to say what I really felt and really thought. I use the words "really thought" advisedly. I have always been an emotional thinker. My deeper thoughts have always been "steeped in feeling." The great matters in which I have exercised myself have appealed to my heart not less than to my head. And the consequence is that whenever I have been able to write poetry, my philosophy has found as fitting a medium of expression in verse as in prose.



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It is with the second of my periods of poetic productivity, with the five years which followed my stay at Oxford, that I am now concerned. Those were, as I have said, years of great mental activity. I was leading a solitary life in that part of the West Riding of Yorkshire which marches with Lancashire,—a region of busy manufacturing towns and villages, lonely moorlands, and deep secluded dales which become populous for a mile or two above their junction with the main valleys of the Calder and the Colne. The loneliness and wildness of the moors and dales made a strong appeal to me; and in making this appeal they interwove themselves with the emotional thought which the great problems of life were awaking in my soul.

Another and an even more potent influence was my love of the sea,—the real sea, the sea which beats against the cliffs and sands of the West Coast of Ireland, a sea of green waves and “trampling surf” and snow-white foam which drew me to it again and again. This influence, too, immingled itself with my meditation on great matters. The sea was for me a symbol of the Infinite and the Eternal. Nay, it was more than a symbol. The message that the “murmurs and scents” of its waves bore to me was a message from the uncharted ocean of my own inner life, or rather from that mysterious world in which the distinction between inward and

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outward is effaced and unity is at last achieved. In the last stanzas of a poem which I addressed to the sea, I say :

“Murmur, O Sea, thy message ; speak to me,  
deep to deep :

We are swept by the same fierce passions :  
we sleep the same moonlit sleep :

For I think that thy restless waters through  
the gulfs of my life have rolled :

And I think that my heart has suffered what-  
ever thy waves have told.

“Speak to me, spirit to spirit : thou art more  
than symbol or sign ;

For thine are the very pulses of the life that is  
lost in mine.

From afar, from the soul's expanses, the winds  
have wafted thy breath ;

And thy murmuring surges whisper of the  
infinite deeps of death.”

Consumed as I was with thirst for the ideal, it was inevitable that my communion with outward nature should take the form of the quest of ideal beauty, and that this should merge itself in the quest of the ideal as such. In a poem addressed “To My Mistress,” the infinitude of the quest, the fact that it aims at the unattainable, that its failure is the measure of

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its success, is duly emphasised. After assuring "my Mistress" that, though the objects of my admiration are many and changing, my loyalty to her—the One in the Many—is unswerving, I go on to say :

"The hedgerow flowers, the poppies in the corn  
Were twined about thy tresses—such my  
faith ;  
The fragrant freshness of the early morn  
Breathed perfume of thy breath.

"And every sound that swept my soul along  
In waves of rapture, was a voice from thee—  
The skylark's airy ecstasy of song—  
The thunder of the sea.

"And when—the storm-clouds past—on blade  
and leaf  
Fresh raindrops sparkled in the sudden glow,  
I guessed that if thy soul could melt in grief,  
Its tears would sparkle so.

"And in the golden mist divinely bright,  
Whose loveliness throbbed through the even-  
ing air  
On sea and hill,—I saw the floating light,  
The lit waves of thy hair.

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“ Or, if the purple of the sunset turned  
The distant river to a rosy streak,  
Methought thy beauty over-conscious burned  
In blushes on thy cheek.

“ But ever, as I sought for thee in these,  
I disenchanted each of its true charm,  
Which vanished, as the fairy moonlight flees  
The daybreak in alarm.

“ The flowers drooped dead : their fragrance  
passed away :  
Sweet sounds were hushed : the raindrops  
lost their light :  
The gold, the purple of the setting day  
Died into clouds of night.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ For this—to know that thou art hiding there,  
Veiled by thy very splendour from our eyes—  
Turns our delight into an aching prayer,  
Our laughter into sighs.

“ And though the veil be thin as sunlit rain,  
Or bridal gauze which flutters snowy-white,  
Yet, if we lift it over-quick we gain,  
Not thee—but empty night.”

Even the passion of personal love loses itself  
at last in the quest of the ideal, and dies in the  
moment of rebirth :



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“ And once a bosom trembled against mine,  
And dark eyes hid their beauty in a mist  
Of overbrimming love : I thought that thine  
Shone through them, and I kissed

“ With burning lips their brightness, till they  
closed  
Their lustre-fringed lids, and kissed the brow  
And coiling tresses till the head reposed  
In ecstasy—’Twas thou !

“ Fond dream. But she, forgotten as I dreamed,  
Waned from my arms into the empty air ;  
And on the darkness for an instant gleamed  
The ripples of her hair.

“ And in their sunlit loveliness I knew  
Thee, the enchantress, fading into gloom—  
Revealed and hidden to bemock the view—  
My blessing and my doom.”

What, then, is the meaning of the quest ? Is  
it luring me on from darkness into the light of  
day ? Or is it its own full and final reward ?  
Or do the two solutions coincide ? Perhaps they  
do. A mocking voice tells me that I have lost  
the substance for the shadow ; but I know that  
it is not the voice of “ my mistress,” and that  
my quest is not wholly vain :

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“ For light is breaking, light whose first dawn  
shows

Only the dappled cloudlets, grey and cold,—  
Yet even now about the Orient grows  
A warmth, a tinge of gold.

“ And is it that thy beauty flits before,  
Eastward and eastward to the springs of day,  
And so, for me who follow, more and more  
The night mists melt away ?

“ Or—for at times the lightning of this thought  
Flashes upon my vision—can it be  
That all this seeking is the treasure sought,  
And thou this dream of thee ?

“ This parching thirst itself the hanging fruit—  
This cruel strife the prize for which I bled—  
The fever of this infinite pursuit  
The phantom form that fled ?

“ And is the sea to which all rivers roll  
The fountain-head wherein their waves begin ?  
Thyself the hidden fire-springs of the soul—  
The light that burns within ?

“ Then all this dawn of day is thy creation ;  
My yearning is the thrill of thy embrace ;  
And in the dream, the hope, the aspiration  
I see thee face to face.”

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It will be seen that my feeling for outward nature went far beyond the limits of æsthetic admiration, of delight in "landscape" for its own sake. It was a sense of oneness with nature, of spiritual communion,—communion achieved through my soul going out into the visible world and mingling itself with it and giving it that *wholeness* which is of the essence of beauty. And this was no one-sided movement. There was a mystical reciprocity in it. What I gave I had already received. What I received I had already given. As my soul went out into nature and became one with it, so the soul of nature entered into my inner life and became one with me.

I have quoted two stanzas from a poem, "To the Sea," in which this interchange of personalities (so to speak) is hinted at. That poem was written in middle life. Twenty years earlier, while I was under the influence of my first visit to the West of Ireland, I had written a series of "Sonnets to the Atlantic"; and the burden of one of these is the intense and subtle sympathy of my spirit with the moods and passions of the sea :

"Oh, stay thy rollers for a moment's space :  
I cannot live thy vast unquiet life :  
I cannot measure the exultant strife  
Of waves that storm yon headland's dripping  
face.

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My heart will break for yearning. Give it grace  
To beat awhile more calmly—to renew  
The lowlier life it led before it knew  
The deep thrill of thine infinite embrace.  
For 'tis my curse that never tempest raves,  
But in my breast it finds its counterpart :  
The echoed thunder of thy caverned waves  
Rolls through the deep recesses of my heart :  
And tides of tyrant passion throb in me  
To match thy pulsings, O imperial sea."

In a poem which I called "Voices of Autumn" I go further than this. The feeling for wholeness, for cosmic unity, had been at work in me, and the relation between inward and outward had become one of identity rather than of correlation :

"Wild in your wonderful wailing,  
Winds of despair !  
Winds of the waste and the darkness !  
Fiends of the air !  
Come from your haunts—from the moorlands  
Lonely and bare.

"Deathlike and weird was the slumber  
Till you wandered by—  
First a faint breath, then a shiver—  
A mutter—a sigh—  
A moan—a wail lost in the midnight—  
An agonised cry.



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“ Children of dark desolation !

I am alone :

All the great storm of your being

Breathes through my own—

Earth-shaking hurricane thunder—

Faint far-off moan.

“ Eddy on eddy of madness,

Frenzied and fast !

How the grim ghosts of the forest

Shook as each past—

Shook till their leaves dead and dying

Went with the blast.

“ Borne on its bosom, my fancy

Follows its flight—

Out of the forest abysses—

On through the night—

On to the shore where the reef-rocks

Are streaming and white ;

“ Follows it driving the ridges

Of darkness and doom—

Sees the white foam of their surges

Flash through the gloom—

Hears how the shriek of the hell-wind

Pierces their boom.

“ Now the wind droops : it is weary,

Worn with its play,—

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Weary of whirling the dead leaves,  
Flinging the spray :  
Only a wail, faint and failing,  
Dies far away.

“ Hark ! that far infinite moaning  
Rises again—  
Rises and rushes and rages  
In volleys of rain ;—  
Hark ! what a triumph of anguish,  
Rapture of pain.

“ Yes—’twas our hearts that were speaking  
To forest and shore—  
Driving, with eddies of laughter,  
Storm clouds before—  
Strong in the pride of the hidden  
Scars that they bore.

“ Finding their fierce inspiration  
Deep in their throes—  
Still through their torrents of thunder  
Moaning their woes—  
Moaning the wound of whose bleeding  
None ever knows.

“ What if my soul has its passions,  
Wayward and wild,  
Chide not their whirlwinds, O Mother  
Mighty as mild :—

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Thine is the midnight autumnal :  
I am thy child."

There was something of self-worship in my adoration of outward nature. It was not until the visible world had been spiritualised by my outgoing soul that I was able to take it to my heart.

"In our life alone doth Nature *live*."

Divorced from me, the visible world became either a pure illusion or the "all of being." In the latter case the loss of my quickening spirit transformed it—transformed the Universe—into a complex of machinery, infinite in all its dimensions, and yet soulless and even lifeless in its very infinitude. This was the "Nature" of the materialist, the cult of which is, as I have suggested, the aftermath of supernaturalism. Its claim to my homage I rejected with fierce but futile rebellion—futile because, if the world was all machinery, I was but an atom of steel in its whirling, revolving mass. In a poem which I called "*Nature-Worship*," I contrasted the false with the true Deity, the "God Without" with the "God Within." The life of the former (if we are to call it life) was wholly mechanical. Was there any purpose in its ceaseless activity? Yes: like one of the mills in the textile district which I

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knew so well, it was for ever and for ever turning out tissue—a quasi-spiritual tissue, the warp of which was Love and the woof Thought. Did not this output justify its existence ?

“ But, no—thy fervent votary replies—

These thy last works, the fairest thou hast  
planned

Are dreams, delusions, air-born phantasies,

That mock the sight and vanish from the  
hand :

Though primal matter, formless and un-  
wrought,

Be sure and solid as the hills that stand :

Yet these that thou hast woven—Love  
and Thought—

Their warp is emptiness—their woof is  
nought.

“ Then all thy life is death, and all thy course

Without a purpose and without a goal :

Thine endless waves of ever-wasted force

On shores of shapeless desolation roll :

Or does one end for all eternity

Quicken each part, give meaning to the whole ?

Is it for this that loom and engine ply—

To frame a mockery—to weave a lie ?

“ Thou art not blind—for thou hast never seen :

Thou art not dumb—for thou hast never  
spoken :



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Thou canst not die—for thine has never been  
A living soul, a spirit to be broken :  
Thou dost not weary—for thou dost not  
feel :  
Thou canst not love : thy heart ne'er gave a  
token  
Of sorrow or of joy : and shall I kneel  
To thee whose breath is flame, whose blood  
is steel ?

“ Not so : but rather with indignant heart  
I hurl at thee revolt and hate and scorn,  
And dare to curse thee, tyrant that thou art,  
For the deep wrongs of man whom thou hast  
borne,  
Only to teach him that his pride is shame,  
And every gleam of his triumphant morn—  
Each pure emotion and each lofty aim—  
A lurid shadow of thy furnace flame.

\* \* \* \*

“ But all in vain : still heedless of the issue  
Thy pistons rise and fall ; thy looms unfurl  
Interminable lengths of dream-like tissue ;  
And wheels revolve, and spindles hum and  
whirl :  
Thy very dumbness and thy deafness foil  
My proud rebellion ; and each curse I hurl  
Is but a creak, a groan for lack of oil,  
A hiss, a sputter, where thy waters boil.”

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So much for the God Without. What of the  
God Within? In my attitude towards him  
adoring love took the place of rebellious defiance :

“ Life of my life ! Soul of my inmost soul !  
Pure central point of everlasting light !  
Creative splendour ! Fountain-head and goal  
Of all the rays that make the darkness bright,  
And pierce the gloom of nothing more and  
more,  
And win new realms from the abyss of night !  
O God, I veil my eyes and kneel before  
Thy shrine of love, and tremble, and adore.

“ The unfathomable past is but the dawn  
Of thee triumphant rising from the tomb :  
And could we deem thy lamp of light withdrawn,  
Back in an instant into primal gloom  
All things that are, all things that time has  
wrought,  
All that shall ever yet unseal the womb  
Of elemental Chaos, swift as thought  
Would melt away and leave a world of  
nought.

“ We gaze in wonder on the starry face  
Of midnight skies, and worship, and aspire ;  
Yet all the kingdoms of abysmal space  
Are less than thy one point of inmost fire :  
We dare not think of time's unending way ;



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Yet present, past and future would expire,  
And all eternity would pass away  
In thy one moment of intensest day.

“Of old our fathers heard thee when the roll  
Of midnight thunder crashed across the sky :  
I hear thee in the silence of the soul :—  
Its very stillness is the majesty  
Of thy mysterious voice, which moves me  
more  
Than wrath of tempest as it rushes by,  
Or boom of thunder, or the surging roar  
Of seas that storm a never-trodden shore.

“And they beheld thee when the lightning shone,  
And tore the leaden slumber of the storm  
With vivid flame that was and then was gone,  
Whose blaze made blind, whose very breath  
was warm :—  
But I, if I would see thee, pray for grace  
To veil my eyes to every outward form ;  
And in the darkness for a moment's space  
I see the splendour of thy cloudless face.”

I was not content to worship this inward Deity.  
I must needs assume that for me his heaven was  
in my adoring heart and nowhere else :

“And I have worshipped at no other shrine :  
No other fount has slaked my sacred thirst :

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I never called Humanity divine :

With all my heart's anathemas I cursed

The creed that dared to say in priestly tone

'Forget thyself, or love thy neighbour first.'

I only answered: 'Could the world atone

For my lost self? Love God: leave man  
alone.' "

As a protest against the extravagances of Positivism, there is something to be said for this stanza. But the protest is overdone. It is true that in the next stanza I try to convince myself that love of God carries love of man with it:

"Since all are one in oneness with thy will; "

But this concession to humanism is an obvious digression and reads like an after-thought; and in the final couplet of the stanza I reiterate my conviction that

"love of man is less than nought to me  
That is not rooted in the love of thee."

Here I went astray. Later in life I learned that the converse of this proposition was nearer to truth, that love of God is unreal and ineffective if it is not rooted in love of Man.



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Meanwhile, I was claiming for myself what I was denying, virtually if not formally, to my neighbour—nearness to the heart of Nature, potential oneness with God. The poem ends with three characteristic lines :

“Lo ! for an instant thou art strangely near—  
Nearer to my own heart, than I who rest  
In tranquil adoration on thy breast.”

This is equivalent to saying that God is my true self. No doubt he is. But did I realise, when I wrote those lines, that if God was that to me, he was that also to the meanest and rudest of my fellow-men ? I doubt it. Of the Divine Trinity—God and Nature and Man—I worshipped the First and Second Persons only ; and because I had not yet learnt to worship the Third Person, I did not really worship—in spirit and in truth—either the Second or the First.

But it must not be supposed that I was incapable of human affection. I had not yet learnt to love my neighbour, my fellow-man. But there was never a time when I did not love individual men and women ; and I was the devoted lover of one community of men and women—my country.

The blood that flowed in my veins was of at least average warmth, and I was by no means insensible to the charms of the other sex. I had already loved and wooed and won—and lost.

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And I deserved to lose what I had won, for (as I have half confessed in the poem "To My Mistress") I was even more in love with Love than with the Beloved. I was passing through a stage which every true lover is bound to pass through. In St. Augustine's well-known words, "*Nondum amabam sed amare amabam. Quærebam quid amarem amans amare.*" But though I was more in love with Love than with any human being, the desire to give and receive love—warm, human, domestic love—was strong in my heart. I had a dream wife on whom I lavished unstinted affection. And in one of my poems I even went so far as to think of myself as parted from her by death. I pictured myself as taking her children to say good-bye to her before they went to bed, and then as waiting by her bedside for the approach of the dawn—and death.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Till something seemed to whisper 'Rise'—

I rose in haste, and bending o'er  
The pillow, sought the dear dark eyes  
Where life's warm sparkle played no more :

"Yet love shone through them—love that gains  
Intensity when force is spent ;  
Infinite in its very chains,  
And in its dumbness eloquent.

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“ For never is the sun so bright  
As then when evening clouds eclipse,  
Nor love so fair as when its light  
Burns through the veil of speechless lips.

“ O speechless lips, I saw you move  
To make a kiss ; but death forbade.  
You told your agony of love,  
Although the kiss was never made.

“ For unperceived death’s shadowy mist  
Came lightly gliding in between  
Our yearning souls ; and, as I kissed  
The lips, I touched the icy screen.

“ And in that touch a chilling wave  
Of wintry breath, that crept and stole,  
Like nightwind moaning o’er a grave,  
Curdled the stillness of my soul.

“ I dared not name or shape in thought  
The sickening doubt, the formless dread :  
Half aimlessly I rose and sought  
The window-pane. The sky was dead :

“ Clouds hung against it, wan and dim  
And lifeless as my darling’s cheek ;  
But just along the eastern rim  
There ran a faintly golden streak.”

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The last three stanzas are significant as revealing my attitude towards the problem of survival. My belief in immortality was still a hope rather than an assurance. My loss of faith in the Supernatural had not yet been fully compensated for by faith in the infinite resources of Nature. But hope is faith in the making ; and the golden streak in the east is at least a herald of the dawn.

It is a mistake, from some points of view, for the lover to idealise his beloved, be she a human being or a community or a cause. Idealisation of a human being has its own appropriate nemesis ; for the actual self of the beloved becomes jealous of the ideal (or idealised) self, and sometimes ends by rejecting the lover and his love. Idealisation of a community or a cause obscures the vision and warps the judgment of the devotee, makes him fanatical and narrow-minded, and arrests that expansion of the communal sentiment which should accompany the expansion of his life. The consequent loss to him is great, but it has one compensating gain. He learns the lesson of uncalculating devotion ; and if, while his experience widens, he retains his power of idealising, it will be open to him to apply that lesson in a larger field, and perhaps at last in the largest of all.

I am an Irishman, born and bred ; and I spent the earlier years of my childhood in the heart of my native country. I owe many things to Ireland. I owe to it a strain of lawlessness which



## RHYMING

tends to free one from bondage to correctness and conventionality. I owe to it (as I have already confessed) some measure of indifference to the English ideals of prosperity and respectability. I owe to it that the scent of turf-smoke is charged for me with memories—happy memories—of my childhood. And I owe to it the inspiring and emancipating influence which the surge and thunder of the Atlantic brought into my life. But I left Ireland at the impressionable age of ten, and I speedily identified myself with the land of my adoption. Ireland had had a chaotic and unhappy history, in which it was difficult for me—a *Protestant* Irishman—to take pride. England, on the other hand, had done mighty things in the past and had seemingly not yet reached the meridian of her greatness and her glory. As an Englishman I was a citizen of no mean city; and I felt that I owed much to the land which had done so much and still did so much for me. The threat of war with Russia in 1878 kindled the fire of my patriotism into an ardent flame and moved me to write the following poem:

### STANDING STILL

“ God be praised that I stand at last  
Facing the enemy, rifle in hand :  
Hist ! how the bullets whistle past—  
And still we wait the word of command  
Though our fellows are dropping fast.

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- “ When will it be my turn, I wonder ?  
Where and how am I doomed to die ?  
Will a sword-blade cleave my skull asunder ?  
Or the lightning flash from a battery  
Strike me dead ere I hear its thunder ?
- “ Will one of those whistling bullets bring  
The message of doom ? Or—worse than all—  
Will a crashing shell leap in and fling  
Fragments of death ? Or shall I fall  
Where bayonets clash and ring ?
- “ Or is it a boon too precious by far—  
Too blest a fate—to die as I stand ;—  
Death mid the press and clamour of war,—  
Death red and hot for the motherland,  
For the land where the dear ones are ?
- “ Mother of nations ! Mother of men !  
I drank in life at thy Titan breast :  
Thine arms of love were around me then ;  
And if ever I muse how my birth was blest,  
I am clasped to thy heart again.
- “ Mistress of Empires ! Queen of the sea !  
The pulse of a strong exultant hope  
Beats in thy breast till it beats in me :  
Thou hast given my life an unbounded scope :  
I am proud in the pride of thee.

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“ I reap the fruit of the toil and tears ;  
Of the deeds of heroes that made thee great ;  
Of the travail throes of a thousand years ;  
Of the patient courage that conquered fate ;  
Of doubts and despairing fears.

“ Each drop of blood that thy children shed,  
Each spasm of pain that broke their breath,—  
For me they suffered—for me they bled :  
O mother's love, I am dumb till death :  
I could speak were I cold and dead.

“ Thou knowest how often I strove to break  
The fetters of speech for a moment's space,  
How love grew a thirst that I yearned to slake,  
How I prayed that Heaven would grant me  
grace  
To strike one blow for thy sake ;

“ One blow for England, however light—  
One drop in the stream of her ample life—  
One breaking bubble—one foambell white  
In one of those whirlpools of eddying strife  
That mark her resistless might.

“ And here I stand ; and the fates fulfil  
My heart's one wish, my devoutest prayer :  
I am standing obedient to England's will :  
Not mine to ask how my comrades fare :  
She has bidden me stand here still.

## IN QUEST OF AN IDEAL

“ I murmur not : I am more than blest :

She has found me a foot of earth to defend :  
She has marked me the way I may serve her  
best :

She judges the issue : she knows the end :—  
Mine to work—be the meaning unguessed.

“ So little a work : but I thank God most

For this—that the issue itself is large—  
That all may serve it and none may boast :  
The pulse beats high in a cavalry charge ;—  
Is it nothing to hold one's post

“ When shells are screaming to left and right ?

When grape is falling in scathing showers ?  
I stand here still with as stern delight  
As ever in fierce exultant hours  
Bade hearts beat fast for the fight.

“ Mother of nations ! and if I fell

I dare to dream that thy love would spare  
A sigh—it may be a tear. Ah ! well,

I hear the voice that accepts my prayer  
In the scream of the passing shell.”

These verses came straight from my heart.  
But though I could give this ardour of devotion  
to my country, and though my relations to my  
countrymen as individuals were always most



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friendly, my attitude towards the rank and file of them—my attitude towards the average Englishman and therefore towards the average man—was one of indifference and aloofness, if not of actual contempt.

## CHAPTER IV

### School Inspecting

As a school inspector I ought to have had unrivalled facilities for gauging the potentialities of the average child, and therefore of the average man. And had I been given such facilities and made a proper use of them, I might have discovered at the beginning, instead of towards the end, of my official life that the potentialities of the average man are limitless, and that my neighbour is therefore "as divine as myself." But the facilities which I ought to have had were denied me. I was the victim of a vicious administrative system, perhaps the most vicious that has ever been devised. Though I bore the august title of H.M. Inspector of Schools, I was really nothing more than an examiner of young children (who ought never to have been examined by an outsider) and an assessor of Government grants (which ought to have been paid on an entirely different principle). A formal examination is at

## SCHOOL INSPECTING

best a upas tree, whose shadow poisons whatever it falls upon ; and when the examination serves as the basis of a report on the school, there is no part of the school-life on which its shadow does not fall. But in those bad old days the examination which a school inspector had to conduct was something more than a yearly formality, something more than the basis of the inspector's yearly report. It had two features which were all its own. On the results of it depended the amount of the Government grant to the school, and therefore the financial solvency of the managers and the bread and butter of the teachers. And it was conducted in accordance with the directions of a detailed syllabus of instruction, issued by the Education Department, the result being that we were all—inspectors, managers and teachers—in bondage to a handful of officials at Whitehall, and that our whole outlook on education was limited by bureaucratic ignorance and imbecility. For the high officials at Whitehall, though they were men of academic distinction, knew as little about education as about engineering, and were no more competent to lay down the lines on which the nation was to be educated than to survey the route of a new railway or design a bridge over an arm of the sea.

Under this regime neither the teacher nor the inspector could get into living touch with the child, or make any serious attempt to understand

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his character or take the measure of his capacity. The mind, the heart, the soul, the whole personality of the child, was an unknown land which we were forbidden to explore. The results of the yearly examination were the only things that mattered to either of us. Or, if they were not the only things that mattered, they were certainly the things that mattered most. As it was my duty to hold the yearly examination, so it was the teacher's duty to cram for it. For him the children were so many grant-earners, and it was his business to see that they earned as much grant as possible. For me they were so many examinees; and as they all belonged to the "lower orders," and as (according to the belief in which I had been allowed to grow up) the lower orders were congenitally inferior to the "upper classes," I took little or no interest in my examinees either as individuals or as human beings, and never tried to explore their hidden depths. Indeed, the idea of their having hidden depths was foreign to my way of thinking; and had it ever presented itself to my mind I should probably have dismissed it with a disdainful smile.

Yet there was one thing which ought to have set me thinking. The differences between school and school which the yearly examination revealed were extraordinary. Here is a case which was by no means rare. A and B were adjoining



## SCHOOL INSPECTING

villages in a rural district. They had the same kind of soil, the same breed of inhabitants, the same occupations. So far as the influence of the squire and the parson went, there was nothing to choose between them. Yet in the yearly examination A disgraced itself, whereas B came out with flying colours. The B children "passed" from 90 to 100 per cent. The A children from 50 to 60. When they were examined in the so-called "class-subjects"—geography, history and grammar—the B children answered eagerly, and on the whole correctly, whereas the A children could scarcely answer a single question. The B children were in "excellent order." The A children, if not actually unruly, seemed to be always straining at the leash; and whispering, copying and prompting were pastimes in which they not infrequently indulged. In all these respects the contrast between the two schools was startling. But the difference between them went deeper than this. The *tone* of B was immeasurably superior to that of A. The A children were dull, sullen, inert, shut up in themselves, and worked, as it seemed, under protest. The B children were bright, active, alert, expansive, and seemed to be happy in their school life. The yearly examination was at best an inadequate test of the condition of a school; but when it revealed such contrasts as these, its testimony could not be disregarded.

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How was the difference between the A and the B children to be accounted for? Of two explanations, one: Either the average child is as clay in the hands of his teacher, who can make or mar him at will. Or the average child has great potentialities waiting to be realised, potentialities which some teachers liberate and other repress. Had I meditated on the problem which confronted me, I would undoubtedly have rejected the clay theory, and I should then have committed myself to the assumption that the average child in the worst of schools has it in him to rise to the level of the average child in the best of schools,—an assumption which, as a thinker, I ought to have welcomed, and which would have opened a far-reaching vista to my inquiring mind. But I did not meditate on the problem. The average elementary school child did not interest me. I thought more about schools than about children, and I accepted with fatalistic apathy the striking differences between school and school which my work revealed to me. The iron of Whitehall had entered into my soul. Can I wonder that it entered more deeply and more lastingly into the souls of the teachers, who lived their lives under the direct pressure of code and syllabus? All honour to those who, while they obeyed their taskmasters, refused to pay homage to them in their hearts. Theirs was that attitude of patient defiance

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which Swinburne has celebrated in a noble couplet :

“ Though all men abase them before you in spirit,  
and all knees bend,  
I kneel not, neither adore you, but stand and  
wait for the end.”

For nearly twenty years the grooves into which I had been drawn held me fast. Then the yearly “parade day” was abolished, inspection took the place of examination, and we were all invited to enter the Promised Land—the Land of Freedom. But we had sojourned too long in the Land of Bondage. To pass from it to the Land of Freedom was not the work of a day, or a year. The Children of Israel wandered for forty years in the Wilderness before they entered the Promised Land; and it was long before inspectors or teachers could avail themselves in any appreciable degree of the freedom which had been suddenly—perhaps too suddenly—bestowed upon them. When I ceased to examine and began to inspect, I saw how the “results” which I had asked for had been provided; and to that extent my eyes were opened. I saw that many things were as wrong as they could be; that mechanical methods were being blindly followed; that the children were being forcibly dieted on semi-digested food; that they were being relieved, as far as possible,

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of the necessity of doing anything for themselves—of seeing, thinking, reasoning, planning, purposing, executing; that they had no initiative, no spontaneous activity, no natural outlook on life; that they could do nothing but sit still and wait for the word of command; in fine, that the teachers had drilled themselves into automatism and their pupils into passivity and helplessness.

All this set me thinking; but my mind moved slowly. I am a creature of habit, and the influence of twenty years of routine could not be easily effaced. The teachers went on for the most part in the ways to which they had grown accustomed. The shadow of an impending examination seemed still to overhang them, and they did not realise that they were free. They could teach me how things ought not to be done; but there were few of them who could show me a more excellent way. If there were pioneers among them, they kept in the background. Pioneering had long been forbidden. The chains of habit, the spell of a tradition had to be broken before the spirit of enterprise could be expected to revive. Had I come across pioneers in those days, I doubt if I should have been able to enter into their ideas or ready to follow their lead. The leaven of freedom was at work in us, but it worked very slowly even in the more enlightened souls. I realised in a general way that the children ought to do more for themselves than

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they were allowed to do. But how much they could do for themselves I did not know. Nor could I see how self-help and self-reliance were to be fostered. I noted the symptoms of the prevailing malady, and I could suggest palliatives for them; but I could not find the remedy. Still less could I find what is more important than any remedy—the secret of normal health. This was hidden from me by my absorption in self and my consequent inability, through lack of imaginative sympathy, to fathom the possibilities of the average man.



## CHAPTER V

### Optimism

I am a whole-hearted optimist. When I search the sky, I am on the look-out for gleams of sunlight and rifts of blue, not for rain-clouds. When I look into the future, I have hope in my heart, not apprehension or fear. While the Great War was in progress, I never for a moment wavered from my conviction that Germany's tiger-spring would miscarry, that in fact in the Battle of the Marne it had miscarried, and that the cause of freedom and justice and humanity would ultimately triumph. When the downfall of Germany was followed by widespread anarchy and misery; when strikes and revolutions and other civil disorders were everyday occurrences; when patriotism was being swamped by sectional greed and selfishness; when the internationalism of class-jealousy and hatred seemed to have ousted the internationalism of sympathy and comradeship; when the whole fabric of western civilisation

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seemed to be disintegrating,—I believed that a new day was dawning on the world, dawning through wild storm-clouds, and that the old saying “wet at seven, fine at eleven” would yet turn out true.

Optimism is theoretical or temperamental—or both. Mine was not primarily temperamental. Temperament is partly physical; and I certainly do not owe my optimism to my physique. For the greater part of my life I have suffered from dyspepsia, and from the head-trouble which accompanies dyspepsia, acting upon it and being reacted upon by it unceasingly. I have never been able to do more than an hour's real brain-work in a day; and to be “hung up” over a sentence has often sufficed to paralyse my digestion for hours. I have so far suffered but little from severe illness or acute physical pain; but for the past thirty or forty years I have never been wholly free from physical *malaise*.

It will be understood, then, that mine has not been the optimism of “high spirits”—the high spirits which are the concomitant of perfect physical health. On the contrary, I owe my sunny outlook of life (so far as it is not theoretical), in part at least, to the very excess of my suffering. It is possible to be a “martyr” to dyspepsia and head-trouble and yet to keep out in the sunshine. But twice in my life I had to pass through tunnels so black and so long

## IN QUEST OF AN IDEAL

that I felt at last that I must either curse God and die or become a whole-hearted optimist. Each of these tunnels lasted for at least two years. The symptoms were not mental. I have always been perfectly sane, as the lunacy laws measure sanity. I suppose the symptoms would now be called neurotic; but that word was less in use in the early part of my life than it is to-day. What I suffered from was a kind of subjective St. Vitus's dance, due, I imagine, partly to brain pressure, partly to excess of self-consciousness. Whatever may have been the cause of it, it was very terrible while it lasted, and it has always been liable to recur. But though I have passed through many tunnels, only two of them have been long enough to tempt me to despair; and in each case, after I had battled with despair, rays of light began to pierce the darkness, and at last I came out again into bright sunshine. When I had left the second of the long tunnels behind me, I had finally convinced myself that darkness, if one will but see it through, invariably ends in daylight. Thenceforth tunnels had no terror for me; and for that reason, I imagine, when they came they were soon over; and when I emerged from them, the sunshine seemed the brighter for my sojourn in their darkness.

When the darkness was deepest, my choice lay, as I have confessed, between rebellious despair and radiant optimism, between cursing

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and blessing God. No middle course was open to me. If I inclined, however slightly, towards either solution, I must accept all the consequences of my choice. What saved me in those crises, what weighted the scale in favour of the Everlasting Yea, was my theoretical optimism, my conviction—half-reasoned, half-intuitive—that light, the light of love and wisdom, is at the heart of the Universe. And I owed my theoretical optimism, largely, if not wholly, to my growing sense of *wholeness*. The pessimist is a separatist at heart. His attitude towards the order of things in which he finds himself is one, first of criticism, then of adverse judgment, then of indignant protest, then of rebellion and even defiance. For criticism to be possible, he must isolate a particular phase or aspect of the existing order—the age in which he lives, his own social and economic environment, an episode in his own life, what is happening here, what is happening now—must isolate this from the universal order, regard it as complete in itself, contrast it with his own idea of what ought to be (the outcome, in all probability of an inadequate and over-hasty generalisation) and judge it accordingly. The attitude of the optimist towards the order of things in which he finds himself is one, first of acceptance, then of confidence, then of fearless faith and unconquerable hope. And if you ask him why he accepts instead of criticising, he will

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tell you that he is not in a position to criticise, that the particular phase or aspect of the existing order which may seem to invite criticism has its meaning and its purpose by reference to the meaning and the purpose of the universal order, and that, as the universal order determines all ideals and standards, as there is (presumably) nothing outside it or beyond it with which it can be compared, his attitude towards it must needs be one of acceptance, with all that acceptance implies. But it is the universal order, and nothing less than the universal order, that he accepts with a whole-hearted acceptance. He accepts the particular phase or aspect for the sake of the universal order, not for its own sake; and his theoretical optimism is therefore quite compatible with a critical attitude towards things as they are and a desire to modify and improve them. The pessimist, having isolated the particular phase or aspect and criticised and condemned it, goes on to criticise the universal order because the particular phase or aspect which he objects to is allowed to exist. But this means that he has not risen to the conception of the universal order as an infinite and self-contained whole. His sense of wholeness, his intuition of totality, is deficient; and he is therefore at the mercy of the passing phase, the passing aspect, his own circumstances,—in the last resort, his own moods.



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I did not reason things out in this way when I resisted the temptation to curse God and die. My sense of wholeness was still in process of development. The philosophy of wholeness had not yet shaped itself in my mind. But I had an intuitive conviction that there is light at the heart of the Universe, and that in submission to the Universal Will there is peace for those who are weary and heavy laden, and hope for those who are tempted to despair. And when I say that in those supreme crises my theoretical optimism came to my rescue, I mean that an optimistic conviction triumphed over a pessimistic mood.

My optimism, then, was in part temperamental bias,\* in part intuitive conviction. It follows that it was largely emotional. Even in what I have called my theoretical optimism there was a strain of emotion which controlled the movements of my thought. Wordsworth has said that,

“Nature never did betray  
The heart that loved her.”

\* I have said that my optimism was not primarily temperamental, in that it had nothing in common with the high spirits of perfect bodily health. But the sense of wholeness, which inclined me to optimism in the darkest hour of my life, must have owed something to temperament; and as the optimistic mood grew upon me, it became temperamental, in the sense that habit, when well established, becomes “second nature.”

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and when my need was sorest it was my love of Nature—of outward nature—that gave me consolation and hope. Its influence was always at work in me ; but I can look back to one memorable moment when Nature took me to her heart, and whispered to me a secret which dispelled all my doubts and fears.

It was the hour of the dawn. The early summer morning has always made an appeal to me, to which not my heart alone but my whole being responds. It has a fragrance which is all its own, the sublimated essence of all sweet, natural scents ; and when I inhale its breath, my cares, my troubles, my perplexities fall away from me and are as though they had never been. Its freshness, its purity, its serenity seem to belong to some other world than ours. And in the silent but irresistible advance of the flowing tide of day it gives me an assurance of victory—of more than victory, of final consummation—which carries me far beyond the furthest horizon of aspiration and hope. As a rule, men are in bed—in summer they are fast asleep—while the drama of the dawn is being enacted. But I have travelled much by night ; and, being a poor sleeper, I have had exceptional opportunities for learning how much we lose through the conventional arrangements which forbid us “to rise with the lark.”

To find fitting words for the message of the

## OPTIMISM

dawn is beyond my power. Shakespeare, in his two inspired couplets :

“ Night’s candles are burnt out, and jocund day  
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain heights ”—

and :

“ But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,  
Walks o’er the dew of yon high eastward hill ”—

has conveyed to us something of its wonder and its mystery. So has Matthew Arnold in the last stanza of “ Obermann Once More ” :

“ And glorious there, without a sound,  
Across the glimmering lake,  
High in the Valais depth profound  
I saw the morning break.”

These passages speak to those who understand ; and as I do understand, they say so much to me that I cannot repeat them to myself without evoking thoughts that are transfigured with emotion, thoughts that “ lie too deep for tears.”

And I know now how they came to be written. For once, when I was in the blackest part of the second of my long tunnels, I awoke very early on a summer morning and could not get to sleep again. At last, in my despair, I rose from bed

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and went to the window, which faced north-east, and drew back the curtain. And then I thanked God that I had been sleepless and restless ; for there, "without a sound," without a cloud, the pageant of the dawn was passing, and I was initiated into its inmost mystery. If there was ever a moment in my life in which I underwent that sudden and complete transformation of the inner man which is called "conversion," it was then. I seemed to be admitted into, I seemed to become one with,

"The pure eternal course of things"—

and I knew, if I had never known it before, if I was never to know it again,

"At last, at last, the secret of the world."

Many years afterwards, when the power of writing verse came back to me, I tried to express—in a poem which I called "The Creed of My Heart"—the thoughts and feelings which flooded my soul in that timeless moment. In the following passage I got as near to the heart of the mystery as it is possible for me to get in words :

"I breathe the breath of the morning. I am one with the one world-soul.

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I live my own life no longer, but the life of the living Whole.

I am more than self : I am selfless : I am more than self : I am I :

I have found the springs of my being in the flush of the eastern sky.

I—the true self, the spirit, the self that is born of death—

I have found the flame of my being in the morn's ambrosial breath.

I lose my life for a season : I lose it beyond recall :

But I find it renewed, rekindled, in the life of the One, the All.

I look not forward or backward : the abysses of time are nought.

From pole to pole of the heavens I pass in a flash of thought.

I clasp the world to my bosom : I feel its pulse in my breast,—

The pulse of measureless motion, the pulse of fathomless rest.

Is it motion or rest that thrills me ? Is it lightning or moonlit peace ?

Am I freer than waves of ether, or prisoned beyond release ?

I know not ; but through my being, within me, around, above,

The world-wide river is streaming, the river of life and love.



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Silent, serene, eternal, passionless, perfect,  
pure ;—

I may not measure its windings, but I know  
that its aim is sure.

In its purity seethes all passion : in its silence  
resounds all song :

Its strength is builded of weakness : its right is  
woven of wrong.

It bears me afar on its bosom ; yet its source  
and its goal are mine,

From the sacred springs of Creation to the ocean  
of love Divine.

I have ceased to think or to reason : there is  
nothing to ponder or prove :

I hope, I believe no longer : I am lost in a  
dream of love.”

I doubt if the choice between optimism and pessimism is determined to any considerable extent by the outward circumstances of one's life. A multi-millionaire may be the most dismal of pessimists, and a man who has scarcely a penny to bless himself with may be the sunniest of optimists. When the wheels of life run too smoothly, he whose temperament or whose philosophy inclines him to pessimism will be apt to suffer from boredom and ennui. The optimist, on the other hand, will find refuge in himself from domestic cares and worries and from other “ slings and arrows of outrageous fortune ” ;

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and if he happens to be poor, he will find in the hard work that poverty necessitates a distraction from "ill thoughts," which the rich man, who has everything done for him, will probably lack. Outward circumstances count for something, no doubt; but they count for less than those who envy the rich and the prosperous are apt to assume.

I should, however, be ungrateful to Fortune if I did not say that, so far as outward circumstances go, mine has been a happy lot. It is true that when I was a child I was nearly always in disgrace; but even that cloud had its silver lining. As the fifth of nine children, I became intimate with each of my brothers and sisters in turn. And we were and still are—the survivors—a happy and united family. The severity and injustice—for nine-tenths of our punishments were undeserved—which cut some of us off in childhood from intimacy with our mother, strengthened the ties of sympathy and affection which bound us together; and no quarrel or jealousy has ever marred the harmony of our family life. I have been equally fortunate in my own home life. After four or five years of storm and stress in the West Riding, I was moved to one of the Home Counties. There I married; and both as a husband and a father I have had more than my share of happiness.

As regards the means of living, mine has been

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the lot which Agur, the son of Jakeh, desired. I have been neither too rich nor too poor. A multi-millionaire has said that when you are very rich you no longer run your money, but your money runs you. This has not been my fate. The multi-millionaire would have regarded me as a miserable pauper. But I have always been free from financial anxiety, and I have been better off than nineteen-twentieths of my fellow men.

But did not the sorrows and sufferings of others affect me? So far as they were brought home to me, they certainly did. When I was a child I was made acutely miserable by the galled withers (due to a worn-out collar) of the donkey that drew our turf from the neighbouring bog; and from this I gather that nature had given me a compassionate heart. But in the earlier years of my adult life I was too a-social to be made miserable by galled withers, whether of man or beast, which I had never seen; and when I did begin to *realise* the tragic aspect of human life, when the sorrows and sufferings of others were at last brought home to me, I found in the doctrines of reincarnation and Karma an explanation of the inner meaning of tragedy, and an antidote to the pessimism which the spectacle of tragic happenings might otherwise have generated. But of this more anon.

In conclusion, whether a man be rich or poor, whether he be happy or unhappy in his home

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life, whether he be fortunate or unfortunate, as onlookers measure fortune, whether he be by nature sensitive or insensitive to the troubles of others,—if and so far as he is an idealist, he is bound by his charter to believe in and hope for ideal good. For faith in the Universe as a living whole, faith in the supreme reality of what is ultimate in synthesis, is of the essence of idealism ; and such a faith disarms criticism and kindles devotion, and so transforms itself, in the heart of the believer, into an all-conquering hope and an all-embracing love.

## CHAPTER VI

### Psychism

When I migrated from the moorlands of the West Riding to the hop-gardens of Kent, I lost the power of writing verse, and it was long before it came back to me. A year later I married, and new interests, new cares and new joys came into my life. I have said that I was happy in my marriage. If anything, I was too happy. The next twelve years were years of mental and spiritual stagnation. I can now see that I needed the rest which they gave me, and I look back to them with gratitude as well as affection. My days of storm and stress were over. I seemed to have settled down complacently into the philosophy which I had worked out for myself while those days lasted. I wrote and re-wrote my *opus magnum*, but I made no serious attempt to publish it. I was still an idealist, with a leaning towards solipsism. I was still sense-bound. I was still serenely indifferent to the



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social and economic problems of the day. In politics I was a Conservative and an Imperialist ; and, as the brother of an Irish landlord, I was strongly opposed to Gladstone's Home Rule policy.\* I continued to examine schools, under the impression that I was inspecting them. The grooves into which Whitehall had driven me still held me fast.

What first roused me from my lethargy was a chance introduction to the mysteries of "psychism." There are two kinds of psychism—the lower psychism of the "medium" and the higher psychism of the "adept," or occultist. In neither sense of the word am I in the least degree "psychic." To the best of my belief I have never met an adept in the flesh. Nor have I had any commerce with professional mediums. But I have had friends and acquaintances who had mediumistic powers ; and I owe it to them that I was able to pass (as an observer and a student) through the portico of "spiritualism" into the great temple of occultism.

The psychic phenomena that I witnessed convinced me that there were more things in heaven and earth than had been dreamed of in my philosophy. Scales fell from my eyes. I ceased to be sense-bound. I realised the inherent absurdity

\* During the eighteen years which I spent in Kent I wrote two short poems only. One was a patriotic poem on the Navy Estimates. The other was an invective against Gladstone.

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of confounding the limitations of my own senses with the limits of objective reality. My faith in the infinitude and omnipotence of Nature, a faith which followed logically from my rejection of the Supernatural, ceased to be merely notional and became vividly real. The world, as I contemplated it, expanded in many directions; and the range of my being seemed to expand with it. The "fourth dimension" of space became something more than a mathematician's dream; and I seemed to discover a fourth dimension, with the possibility of further dimensions, in myself.

One result of this was that the problem of survival interested me and set me thinking as it had never done before. My own hope of immortality ceased to be a mere conclusion and became a personal conviction. In examining the arguments against immortality I found that they all, with one exception, begged the question at issue, resolving themselves as they did, in the last resort, into the assumption that the physical plane of being is the only plane. The one exception was the moral argument. The desire for immortality is said to be intrinsically selfish. There is no doubt an element of selfishness in it, as in every human desire, which admits of being exploited, and which Christian orthodoxy, with its doctrine of individual salvation and its conception of the future life as a state rather than a process, has exploited to the full. But the desire

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for immortality is so far from being intrinsically selfish that if we get down to its bedrock we find that it is the very negation of selfishness,—that it is a desire for the expansion of life and the transcendence of self, and that underlying it is the secret conviction that for the realisation of man's vast possibilities many lives are needed and many worlds.

There are, I think, few men who do not wish to outlive death. Yet I know many men who would rather look forward to annihilation than surrender a cherished theory of things in which no place can be found for a future life, men whose theoretical prejudice against the idea of survival is so strong that they will not even examine the evidence in favour of it,\* and who reject on *a priori* grounds all stories of intercourse with the spirits of the dead. When I first became interested in psychic phenomena, this attitude of *a priori* hostility to psychism in general and spiritualism in particular surprised me; but when I thought things over, I saw that there were reasons for it which, if not valid, were undeniably strong.

\* Professor Helmholtz said of thought-transference: "I cannot believe it. Neither the testimony of all the Fellows of the Royal Society nor the evidence of my own senses would lead me to believe in the transmission of thought from one person to another. It is clearly impossible." This unscientific attitude toward inconvenient hypotheses and unassimilable phenomena is by no means rare among men of science.

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The dogmatic materialist hates psychism because he sees that, if there is a single atom of truth in it, his whole system of thought will crumble into dust. It is notoriously difficult to prove a negative; and this he has undertaken to do.

The metaphysician, of whatever school, hates it because it tells him that there are organs of cognition other than those on which he has been content to rely, and that there are whole orders of things, whole planes of being, which have never come within the compass of his speculative thought.

The man of science hates it because it seems to say "No" to two assumptions which a quasi-professional bias has led him to make—that the sphere of his labours, the physical plane, is the all of being, and that analysis of physical phenomena is the only pathway to reality.

The orthodox Christian hates it because, so far as it countenances the belief in immortality, it finds a natural, not a supernatural basis for it, and because the picture which it gives him of after death conditions is incompatible with what he has been authoritatively taught.

And the plain, average, common-sensical man hates it because he feels that, if he has any commerce with it, his reputation for sanity, for respectability, for "strict attention to business," will be fatally compromised.

Behind these divers reasons for anti-psychic



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prejudice there are two influences which are at work in all of us, affecting us in various ways and degrees. The first is the anthropocentric instinct, the tendency to assume that things as they really are reveal themselves to man as he actually is,—in other words, that the world is in itself whatever the man in the street and the man of science, working in collaboration, affirm it to be. The second anti-psyche influence is generated by the joint action of two tendencies from which no one is wholly exempt and which readily merge into one—spiritual indolence and self-love. There is nothing a man hates so much as to be compelled to reconsider his outlook on life, with the prospect of having to quit the well-worn grooves in which he has moved, smoothly and happily, for many years. To tell a man that his ways of thinking and acting need to be revised is to offer a dire affront to his self-love. To tell him that he ought, at whatever cost, to set to work at revising them is to make a call upon his energy and enterprise to which he will be extremely reluctant to respond. Whatever ground has been won by Humanity, from the days of the first man who sharpened flints to the days of Lister and Pasteur, has been won in the teeth of the blind, bitter, unreasoning opposition which the Philistines of the day, the champions of custom, convention, tradition and routine, offered to the children of light. Jerusalem is not the only city which has stoned its



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prophets. The desire to silence and persecute the reformer and the innovator is strong in every unregenerate heart. Can we wonder, then, that when man is called upon, as he is by the revelations of psychism, to reconsider his whole outlook on life, to reconstruct his whole theory of things, to scrap or at least remould his beliefs, his convictions, his habits of mind, his rules of conduct, to provide himself with new ideals, new postulates, new standpoints, new principles,—his first impulse is to denounce the too daring innovator as a revolutionary or a madman, to pour scorn and obloquy upon him, to shut him up in a lunatic asylum, to send him (if it is in his power to do so) to the rack and the stake ?

While I was still under the influence of the lower psychism, I got into touch with the higher. I read books on Theosophy and was initiated into the "Wisdom of the (Far) East." The higher psychism threw light on the lower. It taught me that the physical world, which seemed to me to be the whole world, and from the oppressive tyranny of which I sought refuge in myself, was only one of many planes of objective being—one of many, and the lowest of all. It told me that, just as the physical world reveals itself to man's consciousness through the medium of his bodily senses, so the higher planes were ready to reveal themselves through the medium of appropriate senses which were latent in most men, but in

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certain exceptional cases were alert and active. It told me that the lower psychism—the clairvoyance of the medium, which gave him access to the plane immediately above ours, the “astral” or “desire” plane—was a gift (of doubtful value), an accident of birth, in no way dependent on spiritual development, which was very rare, but with which some peoples, such as the Celts of Scotland and Ireland, were more liberally endowed than others. It told me, on the other hand, that the clairvoyance of the “adept,” which gave him access to the higher planes of being, which enabled him to read “the memory of Nature,” which initiated him into the deepest mysteries of existence and unveiled to him the whole constitution of the Universe, was the outcome of self-culture (in the largest and deepest sense of the word) and self-discipline, and was therefore within the power—ideally, if not actually—of anyone to acquire, though not one person in a million might feel the call to “enter the path” that led to this far-off goal, and not one person in ten millions might be willing to respond to it.

I had to take all this teaching on trust. I was not in the least clairvoyant; and the call to enter the path of adeptship, if I ever felt it, came too late in life for me—the father of a family and a Government official—to be able to respond to it. I heard much about new senses, new planes, new forces, new kinds of matter. I had no desire to

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question the truth of these statements, but I could not verify any of them or see how they could be verified by ordinary men. So far as I was concerned, the evidence for or against them was wholly internal. Did the scheme of life, did the all-embracing theory of things, which occultism presented appeal to me, or did it not ?

My answer to this question was an unhesitating "Yes." The occultist theory of things was the very theory towards which I had been gradually feeling my way. From the moment when I first got into touch with it I felt that I was on familiar ground. As I studied it I realised that it filled up all the gaps in my own philosophy and gave it the unity and inward harmony which it had hitherto lacked.

It satisfied my idealism, my faith in the essential spirituality of Nature, a faith which had long been merging itself in my growing sense of wholeness. It presented the Universe to me as an organic whole, infinitely complex in its constitution (as one would naturally expect it to be) yet dominated by a fundamental unity ; an organic whole, and therefore a living whole, unified by its own soul-life—One World, One Life, One Spirit, One God and Father of all who is above all, and through all and in all.

It delivered me from the dualism into which, in defiance of my own first principles, I was in danger of falling, through my inability to span

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the gulf of separation between inward and outward, between subjective and objective reality. For it taught me that inwardness always has its appropriate outwardness; that spirit and form—and therefore spirit and matter—are inseparable; that the higher the degree of spiritual development, the more does the relation between the two approximate to identity; and that in the last resort, when the individual self has lost itself in the Universal Self, the circle of being completes itself, and inward and outward, spirit and form, become wholly and indissolubly one.

In teaching me this it solved, to my satisfaction, a problem which has perplexed many generations of thinkers. Is the outward world in itself what it seems to be to the percipient self? Or does it depend for some of its qualities on the senses through which we discern it? Is colour in the eye that sees it? Is sound in the ear that hears it? If colour and sound do not exist objectively, what does? Occultism taught me that the physical plane—our outward world—is only one of many planes of being; that each of these planes exists objectively, as it were, and has its own kind and degree of reality; that each of the planes reveals itself to the percipient self through the medium of appropriate senses,—in other words, delivers its wireless message to an appropriate “receiver”; that for one who lacks those senses the plane in question is non-existent; that, for



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example, though the astral or desire world interpenetrates the physical, it has no existence for those whose astral senses are undeveloped, and that similarly, for the dweller on the astral plane, the physical world has no existence; but that the objective reality of these planes—and of every other plane and sub-plane—is in no way affected by the inability of those who are blind and deaf (physically or astrally or otherwise) to respond to the characteristic vibrations of the plane, and so to get into touch with it and discern its properties and learn its laws. If the appropriate receiver is lacking, the wireless message is undelivered; but whether it is delivered or not, it goes its way without let or hindrance, and its vibrations are not cancelled by the fact that no instrument is attuned to receive them.

My life had hitherto been the quest of an ideal. Occultism set an ideal before me which had one at least of the characteristics of a true ideal—that of being unattainable and unapproachable, that of luring its pursuer on into the infinite and the unknown. “Orthodoxy,” of whatever type, has the fatal defect of setting before the “believer” a cut-and-dried ideal, to which it calls upon him to conform under divers pains and penalties. A cut-and-dried ideal, an ideal which is prescribed by “authority,” is a contradiction in terms. To realise an ideal, or even to think of it as realisable, is to de-idealise it. The ideal which occultism



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set before me was that of infinite development. I might pursue that ideal through an infinity of lives and yet never count myself to have apprehended. But if an ideal is infinite and therefore unattainable, how can it give guidance to him who pursues it? Occultism solved this problem by telling me that the ideal, being inward and spiritual, being in fact the unattainable perfection of my own undeveloped self, was for ever manifesting itself in me and through me and to me, and was therefore (if I followed it faithfully) throwing an ever fuller and clearer light on my path.

I readily responded to this teaching. I had in fact been working my way towards it ever since I began to take life seriously. The idea that the infinitude of the ideal constitutes its ideality, that the endlessness of the way is itself the goal, had long been familiar to me. The poem, "To My Mistress" (from which I have already quoted freely), ends with the couplet—

"And in the dream, the hope, the aspiration,  
I see thee face to face."

What I owed to occultism was not so much the idea of an unattainable ideal as the provision, in the doctrine of reincarnation, of an infinity of time for the pursuit of the ideal. So long as I was sense-bound, my vision of the future was, in effect, whatever theory I might have held about

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immortality, bounded by the grave; and my quest of the ideal was therefore unpractical and unreal, a dream and nothing more. But when the lower psychism delivered me from bondage to my senses, and when the higher psychism initiated me into the doctrine of reincarnation, and so familiarised me with the idea of an infinity of lives, I realised, as I had never done before, that I was, in very truth, a "pilgrim of the Infinite," that as I had existed from everlasting so I was to exist to everlasting, and that my journey, leading me on, as it did, or ought to do, from strength to strength, for ever and for ever, was its own justification, its own reward, its own goal.

So well did the idea of reincarnation harmonise with my whole outlook on life that I welcomed the doctrine, when occultism presented it to me, as if it were a familiar friend. But I soon found, when I began to profess my faith in it, that it was intensely repugnant to the Western habit of mind. The explanation of this fact was simple. Spiritual indolence was at the bottom of it. For centuries official Christianity had taught its votaries to take a static rather than a dynamic view of the future life, to think of it, not as an eternal process in which there would be no standing still, but as an eternal state—a state of salvation or a state of damnation, but in either case a state which would be entered into once

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and for all, and dwelt in for ever. The natural result of this was that in the West the plain average man had got to regard his sojourn on earth as the only *life* which he had ever lived or would ever live, and to concentrate on it—whether he thought of it as an end in itself or as determining his future destiny—all his energies and all his interests. Having grown hard in the mould of this tradition, it was inevitable that he should turn a deaf ear to the teacher who told him that his earth-life was but an episode, or at most a sub-scene, in a drama which had an infinity of acts and scenes, which had never begun and would never end. Such a conception, when suddenly presented to one who was either wholly absorbed in the passing life or was beginning to weary of it, would make demands upon him to which he could not bring himself to respond, and which he would therefore instinctively turn away from and seek to disallow.

There were, however, minds which had ceased to think statically about the soul's hereafter and yet rejected the doctrine of reincarnation. Why, they asked, should the departed spirit have to return to earth again and again? Was not one life on earth enough for it? Might it not be allowed to lead its future lives in other worlds and under wholly new conditions? There was an obvious answer to this objection. Man is living on earth in order to learn the lessons that

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earth has to teach him, and until he has learnt all those lessons he cannot finally sever his connection with earth. His experiences in one earth-life, however varied they may be, are as nothing compared with the vast possibilities of experience which earth can offer him. Each country, each age, each tradition, each calling, each social grade, has its own experiences, its own problems, its own opportunities for development; and it stands to reason that if a man is to exhaust those possibilities, or come anywhere near exhausting them, he must return to earth many times.\*

With the doctrine of reincarnation the doctrine of Karma came into my life and found a ready welcome in my heart. The conception of an all-controlling law of natural retribution which links together the successive earth-lives of each individual soul, both satisfied my sense of justice and threw light on the problem of seemingly unmerited suffering—unmerited, or only partly merited—the problem which has appealed so strongly to the master-singers of the world, the makers of *tragedy*. The inspired poet finds that success (or what passes for such) is no fit subject for artistic treatment. At its very highest level his art refuses to handle any theme but that of

\* I am speaking of ordinary men. The case of the adept is exceptional. For him the path of ascent towards life's ideal summit is said to be direct. But for the rest of us it is spiral; and in a spiral path there must needs be many lives.



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dark and disastrous failure. In like manner he finds that happiness (or what passes for such) is no fit subject for artistic treatment ; that suffering alone can inspire him, and that the suffering must be in large measure unmerited, if the story of it is to rise to the level of genuine poetry. And yet, strange as it may seem, when he sings of failure, he does not move us to despair. On the contrary, though he arouses our sympathy and leads it into the channels of fear and pity, we feel, when the failure has been consummated, that the darkness is akin to that which precedes the dawn ; we feel that a mysterious error has been atoned for ; that an inevitable retreat from an impossible position has been accomplished ; that mighty forces, whose false starts and arrested movements count for more than our most splendid successes, are free to resume their advance. So, too, when the poet makes his hero suffer far in excess of his deserts, our sense of justice is in no wise outraged. On the contrary, we feel that the suffering has a meaning and a scope which make our mundane notions of justice wholly inapplicable to it ; we feel that it is balanced somewhere and somehow by some high demand, some deep necessity, some far-reaching result. The doctrine of Karma explains and justifies this feeling. It tells us that the failure which makes man's life a tragedy is apparent, not real, and that the suffering which is the outward and visible sign of his failure has



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in reality causes and consequences which fully account for its presence, and in doing so transform its actual evil into potential good. It tells us that human life has far wider relations and far wider issues than are ordinarily conceived of, and that the tragedy which unfolds itself before our eyes is but a single thread in the infinite tissue of spiritual destiny, a single incident in the immense drama of Cosmic life.

For the effective working of the Law of Karma a plurality of lives is obviously needed. A great law of action must needs be the mainspring of a great drama; and a great drama demands a great stage.

“It \* knows not wrath, nor pardon. Utter true  
Its measure metes, its faultless balance weighs.  
Times are as nought. To-morrow it will judge,  
Or after many days.”

If the sphere of its action is unduly restricted, if it has not elbow-room, so to speak, its weights and measures will be untrue and its judgment will be unjust. If there is only one earth-life, the arraignment of divine justice which the Hebrew prophet tried to answer—“The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge”—is unanswerable. But if there is an infinity of

\* The Supreme Power which is at the heart of the Universe.



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lives, whether passed on earth or on other planes, there is room for divine justice—which is another name for the law of natural retribution—to operate freely and fully, and one may well believe that its judgment will be just and its weights and measures “utter true.”

What effect did my study of occultism have on my own work as a thinker and writer? What effect ought it to have had? Ought I to have given up thinking and writing, and become a docile student, under authoritative direction, of the existing handbooks of occultism? I do not think so. The evidence for the truth of occultism was, as I have said, wholly internal, and therefore, so far as I was concerned, still incomplete. When physical science tells me that the chemical formula for water is ( $H_2O$ ) I can, if I please, go into a laboratory and verify this statement for myself. When occultism told me that I had already lived many lives on earth and would probably live many more, it made a statement which I could not verify, but which I could either welcome or reject. If I welcomed the doctrine of reincarnation, the reason was that it was in keeping with the general conception of life and destiny to which I had already worked my way. In other words, I had fitted myself, by a long course of thinking and writing, to accept and understand, or begin to understand, occultism; and if I was to confirm my acceptance and deepen my

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understanding of it, I must go on thinking and writing. And I must think my own thoughts. I must plough my own furrow. I must regard as non-proven the details of the occultist cosmology which did not admit of verification, as that word is usually understood. I must not take for granted things which my readers, "uninitiated men" like myself, could not grant. I made this resolution, subconsciously perhaps, but not the less deliberately, and I have acted on it ever since. For years at a time I have abstained from the systematic study of occultism\*; not from lack of gratitude for the light which it had thrown on my path and the stimulus which it had given me, but from a feeling that I could best prove my gratitude to it by continuing to think out the great problems of life for myself.

But when from time to time I take up an occultist handbook and get deep into it, I feel that if its teaching is true, I, as a thinker, am but a child in the nursery, teaching myself to read by making up words of three or four letters. And I feel that even the wisest and most learned of my "uninitiated" contemporaries, the leaders

\* I have made one exception to this rule. I read and re-read a little occultist handbook called "Light on the Path." There is not much of it, but every sentence in it sets one thinking. I read it again and again, partly because it does not go far into detail, partly because I can see for myself that its teaching is substantially true, but chiefly because the austere demands which it makes on one are for me a spiritual tonic of unequalled strength.

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of speculative thought—materialists, idealists, “new realists,” “pragmatists,” and the rest—are in the nursery with me, the difference between them and me being perhaps that they have been promoted to words of two syllables, whereas I am still struggling with monosyllabic sounds.\*

Yet even this feeling, which, while it lasts, is overpoweringly strong, does not deter me from going on with the task which I have set myself. For my experience as a school inspector has convinced me that young children are sometimes the best teachers of young children; and, apart from the duty that I owe to myself, I feel that if, by thinking and writing, I can help others to make up words of three or four letters, I may perhaps start some of them on a path which will end at last in their reading the Book of Fate for themselves.

\* As for the Churches which profess to give authoritative instruction on the greatest of all great matters, I feel that they are groups of children who are playing games of make-believe, with rules and prizes and forfeits of their own, games which they take very seriously, but which are at best but feeble caricatures of the great game which is being played by those who really know its rules.

## CHAPTER VII

### Amorism

In the summer of 1897 I was transferred from Kent to Oxford. I had reached the critical age of forty-seven. My body was beginning to grow old. What of my soul? Was it to grow old with the body? Or was it, as the only alternative to this, to *grow young*? I stood at the parting of two ways. But I did not stand there long. I chose the renewal rather than the mere continuance of life. Or rather, the choice was made for me by influences which were too strong for me. The change from a small country town to Oxford, the stimulus of a great friendship, and my growing interest in psychism combined to give an impetus to the current of my inner life, which was almost equivalent to its rebirth. The days of spiritual stagnation were over; and the river, wider and deeper than in the period of its foam and fury, but not less swift and strong, renewed its journey to the sea. It was not for



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nothing that it had slumbered, or seemed to slumber, for many years. Its waters had been accumulating steadily in the level channel through which it moved with a scarcely perceptible current; and when it entered a more varied and interesting and therefore a more difficult and broken country, it became a torrent again, but on a larger scale.

I had previously said good-bye to my *opus magnum*, having first condensed its contents into a little book which I called "A Confession of Faith, by an Unorthodox Believer." I at once set to work at another "system of thought," which was intended to centre in the problem of immortality; but I never finished this book, for when I had done perhaps three-fourths of it, the sense of my own indestructibility overpowered me, and the problem of immortality ceased to interest me. Meanwhile my power of writing verse had revived; and I used the Shakespearean sonnet as the medium for the expression of thoughts and feelings on a greater problem than that of the immortality of the soul,—the problem of the immortality of love.

I had always been an amorist, a lover of love. I had longed to give and receive the warm, pulsating love which is half devotion, half desire. This was the beginning of my love of love, but surely it was not the end. Complete self-loss is of the inmost essence of love; and to lose self

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is to find self. Therefore the end of life, the ideal goal of the process of self-realisation, is to lose oneself—and to find oneself—in love. The idealist whose idealism is temperamental and emotional rather than theoretical, must needs be an amorist ; for if he is not in love with love, his devotion to his ideal comes from his head rather than his heart. In the passion of sexual love the loss of self is complete—while the passion lasts. But the passion, being half desire, dies of its own gratification ; and when it dies, what becomes of love ? This was the problem which fascinated me. How was love to combine intensity with immortality ? How was it to renew for ever the white heat of its fire ?

As far as I could see, there was but one solution of this problem. The passion of love must be kept alive by being denied the fruition of its desire. The lover must be parted from the beloved by some stern decree of Fate ; but he must continue to love her. His constancy will then be rewarded by the gradual transformation and sublimation of his passion, till at last, as the desire to give overwhelms and absorbs into itself the desire to possess, love itself—the love which is all giving, the love which is therefore infinite, eternal, creative, divine—will become the object of its own, and his own consuming flame.

This was the idea which dominated my sonnets.

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In the last couplet of one of them I asked the great question :

“ Had no stern mandate held our lives apart—  
No voice of doom foreboding grief and shame ;  
Had all the fervent passion of my heart  
Waked in thy heart a like contagious flame ;  
Had life run smoothly ; had the Fates fulfilled  
My every hope, my every dream and prayer ;  
Had all that ardent love has ever willed  
Been showered upon me without stint or care ;—  
Could but one silent prayer have brought me this,  
Would I have breathed it ? O my soul, rejoice ;  
To balance love against a lover’s bliss—  
God of his mercy spared thee this dread choice :  
Does not love die—O dark and awful thought !  
Die of achieving all that it has sought ? ”

In a later sonnet I answered the great question :

“ If love must die of gaining what it seeks,  
Then must it seek what it may never gain ;  
Then must love soar beyond our hours and  
weeks,  
Beyond our suns that set, our moons that  
wane ;  
Beyond our dreams of possible delight ;  
Beyond bewitching beauty’s fatal spell ;  
Beyond imagination’s eagle flight ;  
Beyond the tolling of death’s solemn bell ;—

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Beyond all these, beyond all time and space,—  
Till round the Universe it wings its way,  
And circling back to thy belovéd face,  
Sees in thine eyes the dawn of a new day,—  
Sees in the outpoured radiance of thy soul  
The far-flashed light of its eternal goal."

What is the "new day" which love, triumphant in its failure, ushers in—the new day for love, the new day for the soul, the new day for the world? Is it not a day which is all morning, a day which has no noon?

"When in the east the flowing tide of day  
O'erwhelms the darkness with its flood of light,  
My fears, my doubts, my sorrows melt away  
With the last shadows of the dying night.  
When in the flush of morn a sudden glow  
Tells where the sun's bright banner is unfurled,  
Watching the wonder of the dawn I know  
At last, at last, the secret of the world.  
O mystic splendour, all too soon withdrawn:  
The sun ascends, the spell, the charm departs.  
O well, thrice well, that love's eternal dawn  
Still fires with hope our still expectant hearts:  
Well that its orb ne'er climbs the rim of earth:  
Well that its life is all a glorious birth."

The "wonder of the dawn" is both symbolic and prophetic. If love will remain true to itself, by seeking what it may never gain, and by being content with nothing less than this, its own

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eternity will rejuvenate all things. The life of the world will be all a glorious birth. The life of the soul will be all immortal youth.

There is indeed, in the course of my lover's love, one moment of great danger, a moment in which love trembles on the verge of fruition :

“ I dreamed, Beloved, that I heard thy voice  
Saying, ‘ Thy love shall have its due reward :’  
Take what thy heart desires : be thine the choice :  
No gulf divides us now, no flaming sword.’  
Then didst thou proffer me love’s cup of bliss,  
With gracious words that haunt my memory  
still,—  
‘ O love, for love’s dear sake I bring thee this :  
Drink if thou must ; thy love shall have its  
will.’ ”

But the moment of danger is the moment of safety. The unselfishness of the beloved, her readiness to give the lover his heart’s desire “ for love’s dear sake,” transfigures his love, and sublimates it into a thirst which no wine of earth can slake :

“ But as I heard thy voice and felt thy touch,  
Love’s purest wave surged upward to its flood,  
Matching the love that made thee give so much,  
Quenching with joy the fever in my blood :—  
‘ O love,’ I cried, ‘ no wine of earth can slake  
The thirst for thee which thy fond words  
awake.’ ”



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Love solves all problems, including that of self-identity. Looking back to his pre-love life, the lover wonders if the "I" of those days was the same being as the "I" of to-day :

" As one who, wandering in a pathless dream,  
Scans his own doings with another's eye,  
So when I muse upon my past, I deem  
'Tis mine no more, and doubt if I am I.  
Love ! was it I who through those weary years  
Waited unwearied till love's morning broke ?  
Love, was it I who heard with ravished ears  
Love's voice in thine and at his call awoke ? "

The answer to this riddle is that it is only in losing himself in love, in surrendering himself wholly to love, that a man achieves self-identity, that he finds his true self, and becomes free to say : I am I. Let him die to self for the sake of love ; and love will possess him and become his all :

" What is my self ? A river gliding past,  
With ever widening stream, from source to sea.  
O sea to which all rivers glide at last,  
I am not I till I am one with thee.  
I am not I till, loosed from self's control,  
I cease to be, and love absorbs my soul."

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As the lover learns the great lesson of love, the lesson of self-abnegation for the sake of fuller fruition, he begins to realise the profound cosmic significance of love. Even the spatial Universe glows with the fire and vibrates with the music of love :

“ Not in the strength of duty, but of love,  
Not as Fate wills, but as their comrades call,  
The stars of midnight on their orbits move,  
Each drawn to each, and all aflame for all.  
Blind that we are, we think they blindly sweep  
Through voids of darkness, without guide or aim ;  
Yet all the Universe, from deep to deep,  
Flashes and glows with love's ethereal flame.  
Deaf that we are, we think that silence reigns  
When midnight sends no message to our ears ;  
Yet all Creation echoes to the strains  
Sung at love's bidding by the gliding spheres.  
Silent and dark we deem it ; yet the night  
Rings with love's music, quivers with love's  
light.”

The spatial Universe is but one aspect of the Cosmos. We have been told that “ God is love.” The lover who loves for love's sake only realises that this is no mere figure of speech, but the expression of an all-controlling, all-illuminating truth, the truth which is behind all truths, the secret which is at the heart of all secrets, the law

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which dominates all laws. He realises that love, the essence of which is self-transcendence through self-loss, is the inmost core of reality, the main-spring of existence, the life of the Universe, the other self of God. And so, when he stands, in the hour of death, at the bar of Divine Justice, and is asked what life has taught him, he will answer that he has learnt God's own lesson, the lesson of love :

“ What has life taught me ? Will the Judge Most  
High,  
When dawns his splendour on death's deepest  
gloom,  
Ask me this question, and with searching eye  
Read in my heart my answer and my doom ?  
Oh ! when I stand before God's judgment seat,  
Before his throne of glory and of grace,  
With what confession shall I dare to meet  
The sad, the stern reproaches of his face ?  
What did I learn ? My passions to control,  
To conquer self, to quench the fire of lust ?  
To seek thy will, to purify my soul ?  
Not these, alas ! but O thou Judge most just,  
Thou God of love, I learned thy mystic lore :—  
I learned to love, once and for evermore.”

But will not the denial of fruition tend to transform the love of the beloved into the love of the Divine Lover, the love of love ? No doubt it

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will. And what happier fate could befall the mutual love of the lover and the beloved? Will the lover love the beloved less because he loves love more? Surely not. It is because he loves her truly and deeply and without a shadow of turning, that he is able to give his heart to love; and in his love of love his passion for her, which would have died if he had indulged it, will live for ever :

“ When in the solemn stillness of the night  
My brooding soul is filled with love of thee,  
I seem to stand upon the world’s last height,  
The flaming rampart of all things that be.  
And as I pause upon that lonely verge  
And plunge my gaze into the depths below,  
I see the cosmic billows sweep and surge  
From death to life, with endless ebb and flow.  
But howsoever deep my thought may sink  
Into that well of darkness and of fire,  
And howsoever deep my soul may drink  
Of light and life and wonder and desire,—  
Love still remains—the love that thou hast  
waked—  
Its depths unfathomed and its thirst unslaked.”

What could the lover offer to the beloved which would be worthier of her acceptance than this? She might indeed, if her aim was conquest and

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possession, ask for *less*. But she could not ask for more.

When I ceased to write love sonnets, I again lost my power of writing verse\*, and I then gave my mind to other things. I had learnt much in the school of love, but there was one lesson which I had yet to learn. The purpose of love is to find a way of escape from self into the Infinite, into the life and the love of God. We talk glibly and light-heartedly of loving God. What do we mean by these words? To love God as God is impossible. If we are to love God we must love something which seems to be less than God, love it unselfishly and wholeheartedly, and so transform our love of it into love of love, and therefore into love of God. There are three main ways of escape from self, which love opens up to the lover. The love of "nature," being intrinsically unselfish, is one way. The love of the beloved, if it can purify itself from the desire for possession and fruition, is another way. I had found both these ways; but I was still far from the Kingdom of Heaven. For I had yet to find the third way,

\* While I was writing the sonnets, I composed other poems which I published at a later date. These were either nature poems or love poems, or both. The first and longest of them I called "The Creed of my Heart." It was inspired by my memory of the summer dawn which finally converted me to the "Everlasting Yea." In it, as in some of my earlier poems, I was alone with Nature and with God.



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the way of human love, the way of love of man as man. Till I could find that way of escape, my initiation into the mystery of love would be incomplete. "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

## CHAPTER VIII

### Humanism

Wordsworth has told us that his soul was "humanised" by "a deep distress." It was not so with me. The humanising influence in my life was joy, not sorrow. I had suffered much myself and seen others suffer much; but the bond of suffering had not drawn me to my kind, or had done so only in part. It was a village school, it was the spectacle of the busy life of the children and of their evident joy in living, that finally "humanised my soul."

When I had spent six happy and productive years at Oxford, I was promoted to the grade of divisional inspector and moved to Newcastle-on-Tyne. After a comparatively brief sojourn in the North I was made Chief Inspector of elementary schools for the whole of England, and moved to London. When I was at Oxford I was in charge of a district which contained some 400 schools. As divisional inspector I had a district

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of my own, but I had also the run of the four Northern Counties. As Chief Inspector I had no district, but I had the run of all the schools in England. A district inspector has ways of his own of dealing with schools, which may easily degenerate into deep ruts. A divisional inspector has the advantage of seeing many schools besides his own, and this naturally tends to widen his whole educational outlook. The Chief Inspector, having no schools of his own, is able to approach all the schools that he visits with a more or less disinterested and unprejudiced mind. He can therefore learn much if he is willing to learn.

It was in response to an invitation from an old friend and colleague that I first visited "Egeria's" school.\* That day will always be marked with chalk in my calendar, for it is no exaggeration to say that it made a new epoch in my life.

When I was a mere examiner I was, as a rule, content with mere results. When I ceased to examine and began to inspect, dissatisfaction with the ways and works of elementary schools began to grow upon me. I could not fail to see that far too much was being done for the children; that they were being drilled into passivity and automatism; that even in the more successful schools they were too often mere receptacles for information; that they spent much of their time

\* The school which I described in "What Is and What Might Be."

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in school in sitting still and waiting for orders ; that initiative, individual effort, spontaneous activity were systematically discouraged ; that the discipline, which in some schools was so " perfect " that when silence was enjoined you could hear a pin drop, was an artificial veneer, imposed on the children by Prussian methods, and so uncongenial to them that they were expected to misbehave themselves whenever the teacher's back was turned.\* The general impression left on my mind was that the atmosphere of the average elementary school was formal, mechanical, repressive, devitalising, charged with unreality and make-believe.

Bad as things were in the villages and small towns, they were still worse in the large towns. There the local inspector reigned supreme. In the days of payment by results, the School Boards in such towns as London, Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, Newcastle, etc., had appointed as inspectors schoolmasters who had been successful in earning high grants for their schools, and who, it was hoped, would show their fellow-teachers how to follow their good example

\* If the teacher had to leave the room for a minute he would call out one of the children, place him in front of the class, and make him play the part of the spy and the informer ! When the session was over, the children were marched in military fashion to the door or gate. The next moment " a timely utterance "—a series of wild war-whoops—" gave their souls relief " from the deadly tension of their school life.

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—good from the ratepayer's, if not from the educationist's, point of view. These inspectors were invested with despotic authority, and they wielded it with more zeal than discretion. If the teachers in the board schools were slave-drivers, the local inspector was a super-slave-driver, whose business it was to see that the teachers worked their gangs to the satisfaction of the Education Department and so earned high grants and kept down the rates. In order to achieve this end he prescribed in the fullest detail what was to be done in each class, in each subject, in each week or month or quarter, and he held periodical examinations in order to see that his requirements were carried out. The codes issued by the Education Department in those days, with their minute directions as to the number of books to be read in each standard, the number of pages in each book, the number of lines of poetry to be learnt, the level to be reached in each standard in each successive year, were, as I have said, monuments of bureaucratic ignorance and imbecility. But the syllabuses issued by the local inspectors out-coded the codes. The Education Department scourged the teachers and the children with whips. The local inspectors scourged them with scorpions.

The paralysing effect of such a regime on all who came under it can be better imagined than described. And the worst of the paralytics was



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the inspector himself. He lived in his own past, and he required all the teachers in his district to live there with him. When I was transferred to the North of England in the autumn of 1903 I found that in a certain large town all the children in Standard II. spent the hours which were given to arithmetic in adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing tens of thousands. And this went on without intermission for the whole year! There was nothing in the code of the day to countenance such an absurdity. But in the remote past, when the inspector was himself a teacher, notation up to 10,000 was required to be taught to Standard II.; and this requirement, unintelligently interpreted, had driven him into a rut in which he had stuck fast, first as a teacher and then as an inspector, ever since.

All this, as I could not fail to realise, was as bad as bad could be. What was the remedy? The existing system was based on blind belief in the efficiency of the teacher, combined with complete distrust of the goodness and capacity of the child. If a change was ever to be made, both attitudes would have to be altered; and as over-reliance on the teacher was the result of distrust of the child, a beginning would have to be made by giving the child some measure of trust and some measure of freedom. Trust first, and then freedom. Freedom, because without freedom the child could not learn to do anything

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for himself. Trust, because without trust one could not begin to set him free.

But was the child worthy of trust? What use would he, or could he, make of freedom? What had he in him to bring forth? Was he by nature good or bad, capable or stupid, bright or dull? "The child" for me was the average child in the average elementary school. I had been brought up to regard the lower orders as congenitally inferior to the upper; and the average child in the average school did not belie my poor opinion of him and his kind. When I was in the north I heard some one—an inspector of secondary schools, or the head teacher of a secondary school, I am not sure which—say that not more than half of one per cent. of the children in elementary schools were fit for promotion to secondary. And I accepted this quasi-authoritative statement as correct, and did not see that if, and so far as, it was correct, it was an indictment of the elementary school, not of the elementary scholar.

Meanwhile my interest in "things in general" was as strong as ever, stronger by many degrees than my interest in education, though this, as I have said, was widening and deepening from day to day. Of the two streams of tendency, the former was the main river, the latter a tributary which was flowing to meet and reinforce it. After I left Oxford I wrote two books which I

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called "The Creed of Christ" and "The Creed of Buddha" respectively. The great creeds of the world are a challenge to the agnostic; and I, as an idealistic agnostic, felt bound to respond to that challenge. The world has had two supremely great teachers—the Founder of Christianity and the Founder of Buddhism. What are the ideas which dominate their respective messages to the world? And how far have the religions which bear their names remained faithful to the spirit of their teaching? It was as an amateur, a plain average man, not as an expert, that I approached these problems. I felt that they were not problems for experts only, but for all men who had asked themselves, whether consciously or unconsciously, what were the meaning and purpose of life.

The conclusions which I reached were, in brief, as follows: that Christ and Buddha had much—in a sense, everything—in common; that the differences between them were largely due to the differences between their respective *milieux*, Christ having been brought up in the Jewish, Buddha in the Vedantic tradition; that both were *revolutionaries*—anti-sacerdotalists, anti-ceremonialists, anti-formalists, anti-legalists, anti-dogmatists, the sworn enemies of the tyranny, whatever form it might take, which tends to arrest growth and strangle the soul; that both were *agnostics*, in the truest and deepest sense

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of the word, Buddha having deliberately kept silence about the ultimate mysteries of existence, while the little that Christ said about them was set forth in the medium of poetry, the only medium in which the letter counts for nothing and the spirit has free play; that both were "*naturalists*," in the sense that the "false dichotomy" of Nature and the Supernatural had no meaning for them; that both were *humanists*, elder brothers of humanity, lovers and teachers of man as man, Christ having transcended, in his outlook on life, the limits of nationality as effectively as Buddha transcended the limits of caste; that both were "*Spiritualists*," men who realised that the inner life, the life of the spirit, is the real life, and that it would profit a man nothing if he gained the whole world and yet lost his own soul; that both were *idealists*, adventurers into the infinite, men who meant by "losing the soul" failing to find it, and by "finding the soul" dying to the actual self and living, eternally living, to the self which is ideal, universal, divine; that both had been misunderstood by their followers; that the ideals for which they lived and died had been betrayed and dishonoured by the institutions which professed to embody them; that devotion to the letter of their teaching had blinded men's hearts to the spirit of it; that their ideas had been despiritualised and devitalised by being officially



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formulated and authoritatively taught; that the seeds which they had scattered on the waters had yet to fructify; that their gospels of spiritual freedom had yet to evangelise mankind.\*

Agnostics, naturalists, humanists, spiritualists, idealists—if Christ and Buddha were all these, ought I not to try, at however great a distance, to follow their lead? There were strains of agnosticism, of naturalism, of spiritualism, of idealism in my own creed, but they had not yet blended into a harmonious whole; for one of the five strains, the central strain, the humanistic, the strain which holds the others together, was

\* It will be said that these were not so much conclusions as assumptions, assumptions which I brought with me when I began to study those two master minds. No doubt they were. If I had not started with assumptions which were in a sense personal to myself, I should never have arrived at any conclusion. I should merely have repeated what I had been taught or chanced to hear. My choice lay between interpreting the respective creeds of Christ and Buddha through the medium of my own personality, and passively accepting the "orthodox" expositions of their teaching. I did not expect my views to win general acceptance. Official Christianity was bound to regard me as a heretic—or worse; and I fully realised that I had broken completely with the interpretation of the gospel of Buddha which had long been current in the West. But I found sympathisers where I valued sympathy most. Among my cherished possessions is a letter from Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian poet and prophet, in which he writes: "I have read your Creed of Buddha more than once, and I do not know any other book that has explained the Eastern ideal to the West with such depth of sympathy and understanding."



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still wanting. I believed—without thinking it necessary to formulate my faith. I believed that Nature was all in all, and that the Universe was therefore a cosmos, an organic whole. I believed that the life of the spirit, the inner life, the life of devotion to the Whole, was the real life. And I believed that this inner life was an adventure into the infinite, an eternal movement towards an unrealisable ideal—an ideal which owed to its infinitude its authority and its magnetic force. But what were all these beliefs worth if I did not hold them on behalf of my fellow men as well as of myself?

It was with this faith—and this unfaith—in my heart that I entered Egeria's school. Then and there my eyes were opened. What had hitherto prevented me from realising my kinship with my kind was my belief in the congenital inferiority of the lower to the upper classes. In the presence of Egeria's pupils this belief proved to be a mere superstition; and the resultant barrier between my soul and the soul of Humanity melted away. The activity, the versatility, the all-round capacity of the children could not fail to impress me. But the school had other distinctive features which impressed me even more. Allowed to energise freely, the children were radiantly happy in their school life. And this happiness, this joy in living, overflowed into various channels. In particular it overflowed into the channels of communal feeling and of

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manners. The spirit of comradeship was stronger and more unselfish in this school than in any community of which I have had experience; and the children had a charm of manner, the spontaneous outcome of sympathy and self-forgetfulness, which was all their own.

And these were village children, the sons and daughters of farm labourers, shepherds, workers in market gardens, petty shopkeepers, and the like. I could see no sign of that congenital inferiority to the children of the upper classes which I had hitherto taken for granted. On the contrary. There were some fifty children in Egeria's own room. I doubt if it would have been possible to bring together fifty children, between the ages of ten and fourteen, of upper-class birth and education, who could have held their own with these in mental alertness, in practical ability, in initiative, in resourcefulness, in application, in perseverance, not to speak of such weightier matters as kindness, unselfishness, readiness to co-operate, the spirit of comradeship, and that joy in living which is the surest proof of all-round well-being. As for "manners," of which the upper classes are supposed to have a monopoly,—in this respect, if in no other, these "country bumpkins" were in a class by themselves. There were few budding aristocrats who would not have seemed awkward, tactless, and even loutish by their side.

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I will not go further into detail, for I have already written fully about the school. But I will try to tell my readers what the school did for me. I paid it many visits, and the more I knew of it, the more it taught me. Under its influence my interest in education began to merge itself in my general interest in life. I realised that there was no educational problem which, if I tried to solve it, would not take me at last to first principles, to the bedrock of thought and things. I realised that the reform of education, for which there was obviously urgent need, was not to be achieved except through the reform of religion, of morals, of social life. I also realised that, inasmuch as the child is father to the man, these reforms were not to be achieved except through the reform of education.\* And I began to think and write about education, knowing that in doing so I was thinking and writing about life as a whole, and that sooner or later I would return from the philosophy of education to the philosophy of life as a whole.

Meanwhile the gap in my own philosophy, the fatal gap which had made it incoherent, inharmonious and ineffective, was beginning to disappear. I was beginning to realise that inter-

\* The vicious circle in which I was thus involved, and am still involved, does not seriously disquiet me; for I knew that all progress is made through the practical disruption of vicious circles which are logically complete.

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course with God, which was the end and aim of my life, was not to be achieved except through intercourse with my fellow men; that my claim to citizenship in the Kingdom of God was based on my being a citizen in the Kingdom of Man. This growing conviction was balanced by another which was at once antithetical to it and complementary—namely, that, inasmuch as devotion to a community must for its own sake have devotion to a larger community at the heart of it, I could not hold intercourse, saving intercourse, with my fellow men except through the medium of intercourse with God. Out of the interaction of these two paradoxical conceptions, a larger, saner, more harmonious philosophy than any which I had yet worked out for myself began to emerge; a philosophy which covered all aspects of life, individual, social, political, ethical, educational, religious, spiritual; a philosophy which opened up such far-reaching vistas that the dream of thinking out the supreme problem to a solution and so winning inward peace, became finally discredited. As that dream faded away, an idea which had often haunted me took possession of my mind—the idea that the quest of ideal truth is its own reward and its own goal, and that “the peace which passeth all understanding” has nothing in common with mental repose, but is rather the peace of the stars “that still sojourn and still move onward,” the peace of unending motion, of infinite unrest.

## CHAPTER IX

### Wholeness

If I had to give a name to the philosophy in which my soul has found refuge—the refuge, not of a safe harbour, but of the open sea—I would call it the philosophy of *wholeness*. When I made my choice between materialism and idealism, I committed myself to the assumption that what is ultimate in synthesis, not in analysis, is real. What is ultimate in synthesis is the Universe itself, the totality of things regarded as an organic whole. This is real—supremely real, absolutely real, alone real. The things that surround me are real in varying degrees; but they are real with, and in, and through, the reality of the all-embracing Whole. The unifying principle in things is life. Whenever we have the One in the Many, unity in complexity, we have either life, or—as in the case of man's handiwork, whether artistic or mechanical—the expression and embodiment of life. The greater



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the complexity, the higher is the unity and the higher the life to which it bears witness.

As life gains in complexity and unity, it begins to transform itself into soul-life. It may, indeed, be contended that all life is soul-life, that even in the humblest beginnings of life the germs of soul-life are discernible. Perhaps they are. What is certain is that the higher the life, the more worthy is the organism, the thing that lives, to bear the title of living soul. If this is so, then the life of the Whole is soul-life, pure and simple. In other words, the Soul of the Universe (God, as we call it) is what is ultimately real in the Universe; real in a sense which it is difficult to define, but which is implicit in Emily Brontë's sublime apostrophe of the Eternal:

“ Though earth and man were gone,  
And suns and universes ceased to be,  
And Thou wert left alone,  
Every existence would exist in Thee ”;

real in the sense of being the fountain-head of reality, the ocean which is at once the source and the goal of all its own effluent and reflux streams, and which is also *in* each of these, from the trickling rivulet to the great river which is widening out into the sea.

In what relation do I, the individual, stand to the Universal Soul? The answer to this question

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is to be lived rather than spoken. My bias towards wholeness is practical as well as theoretical. In the very act of recognising the supreme reality of wholeness, I recognise self-integration, or the achievement of wholeness, as the end and purpose of my life. The transition from the one position to the other is real rather than notional, vital rather than logical.

But what is self-integration, and how is it to be achieved? It is obviously the goal, the unattainable goal, of the process of self-realisation or soul-growth. If I am to achieve wholeness, I must realise all my potentialities; I must grow to the fullness of my predestined stature. The law of growth is the master law of my being and the essence of growth is the realisation of the ideal which is at the heart of the actual. What is the ideal self which is at the heart of my actual self? And in what relation does it stand to the ideal self or soul of the Universe?

This is the question of questions. Can I integrate myself independently of the Supreme Integer, the living Whole? Surely not. If the Universe is a living whole, I live in its life, and apart from its life I am nothing. In a perfectly organised organism each part and each particle functions for the good of the whole, and finds its own *raison-d'être* in doing so. When the part or the particle is itself a living being, it finds the well-spring of its own life in living for the whole.

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We, as conscious intelligent beings, are free within varying limits to make our choice between living for the Whole and living for self. We can, if we please, try to integrate self apart from the Supreme Integer. In other words, we can, if we please, try to achieve wholeness by living for self. But the attempt is foredoomed to ruinous failure. For either it takes the form of undue specialisation, as when the artist lives for art, the fanatic for religion, the voluptuary for pleasure. Or it takes the more familiar form of accepting the actual self as adequate and final, of idealising it, of ministering or trying to minister to all its desires and demands. Undue specialisation is obviously the negation of self-realisation. The specialist deliberately sacrifices the whole to the part; and his punishment is that the special end at which he aims eludes his pursuit owing to his failure to relate it to the meaning and purpose of the whole. The artist who lives for art, and art only, misinterprets the function of art as surely and as profoundly as the fanatic misinterprets the function of religion, or the voluptuary the function of pleasure. It is the same with the man who idealises his actual self and tries to live for it. He, too, is doomed to stultify his own efforts, to "baffle his own prayers." For the more assiduously he ministers to the desires and demands of self, the more insatiable do these become; so that, instead of integrating self, he

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finds, sooner or later, that he has been working for its—and his—disintegration, contracting its range and lowering its level by his life of self-indulgence and self-absorption, till at last, with the ever-narrowing circles and ever-accelerating velocity of a whirlpool, it begins to lose itself in, and draw him down into, its own deadly depths.

Selfishness is universally reprobated, and unselfishness is universally honoured. We realise, sub-consciously, if not consciously, that these are the left-hand and the right-hand paths respectively, between which each of us must make his choice. But we do not sufficiently realise that the choice between the two resolves itself in the last resort into the choice between the individual and the Universal Self, between bondage to the actual and the finite and devotion to the Ideal and the Whole. In the sphere of conduct the choice between unself and self is the choice between right and wrong. There is no kind of right doing which is not ultimately resolvable into self-control or self-surrender, no kind of wrong doing which is not ultimately resolvable into self-indulgence or self-assertion. But in neither case does our analysis go deep enough. We do not realise either the purpose or the scope of either of these ways of life. Hence the confusion, the demoralising confusion, of our views about morality. Hence our inability to come to

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an understanding with ourselves as to the relation between morality and religion. Matthew Arnold defined religion as morality touched with emotion. This definition is, I think, wholly inadequate. Would it not be nearer to truth to say that religion is morality transformed and even transfigured by "the intuition of totality" and the consequent sense of obligation to the Whole? The essence of religion is disinterested devotion, devotion to an end so large that the service of it must needs exclude every thought of self. And it is the capacity for disinterested devotion which distinguishes the dwellers on the higher from those on the lower levels of morality—the saint and the hero from the man who is content to do his duty to his neighbour and obey the law.

If the religious sense, the sense of obligation to the Whole, is the ideal basis of man's moral life, it is also, and in no less a degree, the ideal basis of his social life. The distinction between the moral and the social life is a more or less artificial one, and will not (one may safely predict) be permanently maintained. The social life is the life of obligation to one's neighbour as a fellow citizen; the moral life, the life of obligation to him as a fellow man. When the tribe was the only political unit, the two lives were one, or rather the moral life had not yet begun to disengage itself from the social. With the gradual supersession



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of tribalism, first by civicism (if there is such a word) and then by nationalism, the separation between the two lives began. This was a necessary stage in man's development, but it was also a misfortune for each of the diverging lives. While the two were still one their union was blest by religion, but it was a narrow religion, the cult of a tribal deity, a God whose hand was, or might be, against all other Gods. When the two become one again religion will again bless their union. But it will be a religion as wide as the tribal religion was narrow. Christianity tried to fuse the two lives into one ; but it failed disastrously because, in defiance of the teaching of its Founder, it worshipped a glorified tribal deity, a God who was supposed to be pan-cosmic, and who yet was jealous and had favourites and took sides. If the two lives are indeed to become one, their fusion will have to be effected through the worship of the All-Father, the living Whole.

The separation of the moral from the social life has thrown both lives into dire confusion. When the well-being of the tribe was the final end of moral action, the path of duty was direct and clear. To-day, in the labyrinthine maze of our complex life, the path is hard to find and easy to lose. Selfishness mistakes itself in all sincerity for unselfishness, and a hideous crime may even pose as an heroic act. That Germany should have sought to justify her treacherous

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invasion of Belgium, and prided herself on the sinking of the *Lusitania* and other atrocities, shows what urgent need there is for a paramount principle, for a High Court of Appeal, to adjust the respective claims of the two lives. Such a principle, such a Court of Appeal, is at our service if we will but invoke its aid. We have seen that the supreme choice for each of us, whether our outlook on life be wide or narrow, is that between selfishness and unselfishness. Let us take care, then, when we devote ourselves to a community or a cause, that there are no dregs of selfishness in our seemingly disinterested devotion. Collective or corporate selfishness is as real and as immoral as individual selfishness, and has the advantage (from its own point of view) over the latter of wearing a mask of disinterestedness which hides its real nature even from the conscience of those who indulge in it. The Great War has been followed by widespread social chaos; and one of the chief causes of this state of things is that corporate selfishness is everywhere masquerading as virtue. The miner prides himself on his loyalty to his union, and is animated by the spirit of comradeship when he goes on strike. But when his union threatens to strangle the economic life of the nation in order to secure material benefits for its members, he becomes a partner in its corporate selfishness, and his very virtue begins to savour of vice. And his case

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is typical of what is going on in all parts of the world and in all social grades.

There is one way, and one way only, in which this sinister tendency can be corrected and the disorder of our social life cured. Devotion to a community or a cause must always have at the heart of it devotion to a wider community or a larger cause, and the claims of the latter must, in the event of a conflict, take precedence of those of the former. This is the golden rule. Wherever it is recognised and obeyed, ethics, civics and economics lose themselves in religion and become one. For the wider community must have a still wider, the larger cause must have a still larger, at the heart of it, until we come at last to the widest and the largest of all. Some of us seem to think that pan-humanism is the cure for all our social ills. I doubt if it is. The failure of Positivism, the religion of Humanity, to evangelise more than a handful of theorists and enthusiasts is significant. If the service of Humanity were regarded as an end in itself, a too materialistic view of the needs and desires of Humanity would almost certainly be taken; and this would react sooner or later on all our lesser loyalties and humbler services. The universal diffusion of comfort and leisure would become the highest end of human endeavour; and one result of this would be that each nation, each class, each trade would claim for itself its share, or more than its share, of

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comfort and leisure, and the old jealousies and quarrels would reappear. If we would serve Humanity aright we must help it to realise its own perfection, to fulfil the end of its own being ; and that perfection is unattainable, and that end lies beyond itself. Therefore, if pan-humanism is to give us order and peace in the place of chaos and strife, it too must have at the heart of it devotion to a wider community, to the widest of all communities, the Kingdom of God.

And the lesser loyalty will not suffer because the larger loyalty takes precedence of it in our hearts. On the contrary, being to that extent purged of selfishness, it will be purer and stronger than it would otherwise have been. The member of the sectional trade union will serve it more effectively if he recognises that the union as a whole has the prior claim to his allegiance. As a member of the larger union he will best prove his loyalty to it by being ready on occasion to subordinate its interests—its apparent interests—to the welfare of his country. The patriot will be the better patriot if he serves his country, not for its own sake only, but also because it is a province in the Human Commonwealth. And the humanist will be the better humanist if he interprets the claims and needs of Humanity through his vision of the Ideal and the Divine. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."



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Devotion to the Whole, then, is the only effectual antidote to the selfishness of the individual, and the separatism, or corporate selfishness, of the community. In other words, it, and it alone, can moralise and socialise our lives.

This is one aspect of the philosophy of wholeness. But it is not the only aspect. There are three ideal ends of man's being—Truth, Beauty and Love. And the reason why these ends are lodestars in our lives is that devotion to each of them, if it is pure and disinterested, readily and of inner necessity transforms itself into devotion to the Whole. Love, indeed, stands apart from the rest in that love of Love *is* love of the Whole; and that it is therefore the medium through which the quest of Truth and the quest of Beauty lose themselves in the quest of the Divine. But Truth and Beauty are of the same sublime brotherhood; and if Love is greater than they are, it is only "first among its peers."

The distinction between Truth and Beauty is inherent in the distinction between reason and intuition, between conscious thought and subconscious vision. It will hold good as long as that distinction holds good. It will be transcended when, if ever, that distinction is transcended. Truth is the objective side of knowledge, the subjective side of reality. Ideal truth is therefore the subjective side of ultimate reality. The pursuit of truth is the attempt to discover



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the real in the phenomenal, the One in the Many, the laws which are behind facts, the principles which are behind laws. When order, inward harmony, is discovered by reason we have truth. When it is discerned by intuition we have beauty. The greater the complexity, the higher is the underlying unity, and the nearer we are, if reason can discover that unity, to ideal truth. In the Whole the complexity is infinite, and the underlying unity is infinite. In other words, the cosmic order, the inward harmony of the Whole, is perfect. In the unravelling by reason of the cosmic order we have the pursuit of ideal truth. In the revelation to reason of the inward harmony of the Universe we have the attainment of ideal truth. But the goal is unattainable. The pursuit of ideal truth is an adventure into the infinite. As such, it is its own reward. The dogmatic spirit, which seeks to find rest in a formula, is the negation of the scientific. Reason will never succeed in unravelling the order which underlies the complexity of things; but it will never weary of trying to do so.

For the adventurous mind, then, the Universe is ideal truth. For imaginative insight, for inward vision, the Universe is ideal beauty. The direct perception of wholeness is of the essence of the æsthetic sense. Where ordinary men see only a chaos of details, many of which are sordid and even repulsive, the artist sees a whole;

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and that whole is a thing of beauty. There is no need for him to unravel by force of reason the order which unifies the multiplicity of details. The One in the Many, the inward harmony of things, is for him the object, not of thought, but of vision. In other words, it is the intuition of totality which distinguishes the artist from other men. It follows that the goal of artistic aspiration is the vision of the Universe, the immediate perception of the sum of things as an indivisible, unanalysable whole. This would be the revelation of absolute beauty, the Beatific Vision, the fulfilment of all dreams. But here, too, the goal is unattainable. The part can no more see the Whole than it can understand the Whole. Or, if it can come nearer to vision than to understanding, it can never attain to it. There may be less of self, less of the desire for possession, in the thirst for beauty than in the thirst for truth. But there is enough, and more than enough.

What then ? Will the part never understand ? Will it never see the Whole ? Yes, it will ; but not until it has lost itself in the Whole. Not until the desire to possess has been submerged by the desire to be possessed. Not until the thirst for truth and the thirst for beauty have slaked themselves at the fountain of love. For in love you become one with what is loved ; and being one with it, you understand it with an

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intimacy and a subtlety which transcend the range of reason ; and you see it with a transfiguring vision which transcends the range of the artist's creative eye. This is so when the beloved is a kindred soul, a man or a woman like oneself. How much more would it be so if the beloved were the Divine Lover, the living Whole ! The ideal end of love is the Whole, and nothing less than the Whole. For the essence of love is complete self-loss. While the passion of love lasts, the whole of self is wholly surrendered. But the passion is as a rule as transient as it is intense. If it is to endure for ever, its object must be worthy of it. And what object is worthy of so great a passion but the Divine Lover, who is himself the Soul of Love ? " My son, give me thy heart ! " This is what the soul of all things is ever saying to each of us, as it speaks to us through all the voices of earth and sky, of land and sea, of day and night, through the pageant of history, through the work of the artist, through the song of the poet, through the deeds of the hero, through the eyes and the lips of all who are near and dear to us. " My son, give me thy heart ! " If Truth, Beauty and Love are indeed the supreme ends of one's being, there can be but one response to this appeal. Give your heart to the Divine Lover, and you will become one with supreme reality and therefore with Ideal Truth. Give your heart to the

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Divine Lover, and you will become one with the inward harmony of the Universe and therefore with Ideal Beauty. Give your heart to the Divine Lover, and you will become one with Love.

I think I can now see what self-integration really means. It means that the Whole is realising itself in each individual life. Self-integration apart from the Whole is spiritual suicide. Self-integration through oneness with the Whole is eternal life. This is the mystery of mysteries, that the Whole can hide itself, as it were, in each human heart, as a tree hides itself in each of the seeds which it bears, and can realise itself in each heart in all the infinitude of its wholeness. But, for this to be possible, one must empty oneself of "self," one must give one's heart to God. In one of my "Sonnets to the Universe" I have tried to find words for this mystery :

### THE TRUE SELF

" They tell us that the mighty banyan-tree,  
Itself a forest, has a speck-like seed,  
In which it hides its life's totality,  
A spell-bound prisoner, waiting to be freed.  
So do you hide your Self—the One, the All—  
In this my heart, this seed which you have sown ;  
Waiting to wake from slumber at my call,  
Waiting for me to claim you as my own.

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Patient you wait. Shall I with stubborn will  
Rest in myself, content with what is mine ?  
Or, with high purpose, labour to fulfil,  
Dying to self, my fate and your design ?  
Nay, but who dies to self doth self renew ;  
For I am I only when one with you."



## CHAPTER X

### Waiting

I am growing old, and I have not long to live. The prospect of dying does not disquiet me in the least. The sophistries of the annihilationists have never appealed to me. If I have not taken the trouble to unravel their flimsy web of question-begging arguments, the reason is that I tore my way through it long ago. I am about to enter on a new life. There is a child within me which shrinks a little, just a very little, from the unknown. But on the whole I can honestly say that I look forward to the next phase in my existence with much curiosity but with no apprehension.

What of my past life? I have spent the greater part of my days "in quest of an ideal." I have not found it. Could I have hoped to do so? If an ideal could be found it would not be ideal. There is no such thing as *an* ideal. There is *the* Ideal, just as there is the Infinite, the Universal, the Real, the Divine. But the Ideal is a thing to be lost in, not to be found; to be possessed by, not to possess. Yet my quest has not been in vain. I have been voyaging through

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narrow and perilous seas ; and I have thought of my ideal as a harbour of refuge in which my barque, " its storms all weathered " and its perils all past, might " sit quiescent on the floods," if not for ever, at least for a long period of rest and refreshment, which I need not look beyond. I have not found such a harbour, for it is not to be found. But I have resisted the temptation to cast anchor in some treacherous roadstead, in which, if my anchors had dragged, I might have been driven ashore and lost. And my reward has been that the channel is now widening before me and I am beginning to meet the swell of the open sea.

When I left Oxford, some 16 years ago, I lost, for the third time in my life, the power of writing verse. I thought that I had lost it for good and all. But last year it came back to me for a few weeks ; and while I was under its influence I composed a short sequence of " Sonnets to the Universe." This is my swan-song ; and it sums up my philosophy of life. I called one of these sonnets " Faith." It runs thus :

" Men ask what I believe. I cannot say.

Faith is the other self of deep desire.

Faith is a flood which sweeps all forms away,—  
The flaming outrush of an inward fire.

Men ask what I believe. I cannot guess.

I love you with my heart, my mind, my soul.

This is my creed. What more can I confess ?

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Love baffles speech, and breaks from thoughts'  
control.

Men ask if I am happy ? Have I found  
Safe anchorage in life's uncharted sea ?  
Nay, I am on a voyage. I am bound  
For seas and lands unknown. I wander free.  
I find life's treasure in this endless quest,  
And peace of mind in infinite unrest."

The approach to the open sea, with the "infinite unrest" of its swelling waves, is for me the equivalent of Bunyan's "Land of Beulah," and I glide along its ever-widening waterway, with peace in my mind and heart.

But what work have I done in my life, and what has been its value ? I have not been a successful author, as success in authorship is usually measured ; but as I wrote, not for success or profit or fame, but for the better ordering of my own thoughts, I have nothing to complain of on this score.\* My books have not been without their readers ; and they have done one thing for me which outweighs whatever pain and labour they may have cost me,—they have enriched my declining years with the companionship of many kind and true friends. There was a time perhaps

\* The pursuit of an ideal is scarcely compatible with the pursuit of "success." For so variable is the standard of success, so largely is it determined by the passing mood or phase, that the idealist who cares overmuch for succeeding will find sooner or later that he has been steering his course by a wandering star.

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when the prospect of making a stir in the world and becoming known to fame had some attraction for me. But now as I feel the rise and fall of the incoming waves, and as the land recedes on either side, the true values of things are gradually revealing themselves, the "prizes of life" which may once have bulked large in my eyes are gradually fading away into specks on the horizon, and I am beginning to realise that the prize beyond all prizes, the one thing that really matters, is the voyage itself, the adventure into the unknown.

Nature, however, is infinitely and inexorably just. We pay and we are paid for everything that we say and think and do. I have lived a strenuous life and I have not "served God for nought." A reward is due to me. What form will it take? In one of my sonnets which I called "The True Reward," I have tried to answer this question :

"What do I seek? What does my soul desire?  
To give desire a fuller, freer scope:  
To make intenser its intensest fire:  
To pass beyond the horizon of its hope.  
What vision lures me on? What dream sustains?  
No prize of victory. No garnered fruit.  
I reap my harvest in my wounds, my pains,  
The stress of strife, the ardour of pursuit.  
Why do I strive? That I may strive the more.  
Why do I toil? Not for life's daily bread.

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Why do I climb ? That I may learn to soar.  
Success, achievement is the doom I dread.  
Have I succeeded ? One reward I claim—  
A task beyond my compass and my aim."

My "life's little day" bids fair to have a stormy sunset. The war has broken up the great deeps of our social life. The old landmarks have vanished. The new have not yet been fixed. The whole world seethes with disorder and unrest. Life has become a scramble for possessions and pleasures, a welter of anger, hatred, jealousy, greed, ambition, intrigue. Never, as it seems, was selfishness, whether individual or collective, so well organised as it is to-day or so strongly entrenched. Never was the sense of duty lower. Never did the spiritual and the ideal count for less in men's lives. We live from day to day, and cannot guess what the next year or even the next month has in store for us. Riot, revolution, plunder, massacre—all these are possibilities even in this well-ordered land of ours.

A gloomy picture this ; but its gloom casts no shadow on my faith. A great tapestry is being woven by the Fates ; and for the moment we see only the seamy side of it, and perhaps only one corner of that seamy side. That the war should be followed by a period of moral and social chaos was inevitable. Feudalism, which had been slowly dying for centuries, committed suicide when Germany fought for world-power



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and fell; and there was nothing ready to take its place. This and the natural reaction from the tension of this tremendous and protracted struggle are enough to account for nine-tenths of the things that alarm and distress us. But Nature's recuperative power is inexhaustible, and we may be sure it is already at work. Our troubles, as a friend of mine has aptly said, are only the growing pains of the human spirit. There are times when forces which have been slowly and silently accumulating, and for which no adequate outlet had been provided, overflow their barriers, and the river of progress becomes a devastating flood. But the flood will abate, and the river will fall back into its channel and resume its journey to the sea, in greater volume than before and with a stronger and surer current.

It will be seen that in spite of all these "alarums and excursions," these horrors and excesses, I am still, as of old, an ardent and uncompromising optimist. My faith in the living Whole, which is the other self of my idealism, delivers me from despair and doubt. Nay, it does more than this. It changes doubt into assurance and despair into a "larger hope."

"We look but a little way. The part can see but a part.

And only thyself, O God, canst see thyself as thou art."



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To lose faith in the Whole because of the temporary aberration of a part, or because the course of things will not conform to some petty standards of one's own, is the mark of a faint heart and a myopic mind. It is possible that even in this hour of madness men are nearer to the truth of things than in the years of peace and prosperity which preceded the war. For life, even if it be wild and riotous, is better than stagnation. And the ferment of passion and strife is better than the enforced order which conceals injustice, oppression, corruption, and decay.

More than forty years ago, I wrote a poem which I called "The Mêlée, or Progress," and which was in some degree prophetic, as one's earlier poems often are. With its last stanza, which means more to me now than it meant then, and to the final couplet of which I can say *Amen* with my whole heart, I will close this story of my inner life :

"They say that our cause is broken. I see with  
the eyes of death,  
Whose mists are stealing around to hide me  
away from pain.  
I shall sleep as a little child on the bosom of one  
deep faith,  
That never a wound was wasted and never a  
blow was vain."

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